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## Chapter 3

# Influence of the 2008 economic crisis on the functioning of the political system of contemporary Spain

**Malgorzata Myśliwiec**

### 3.1 Introductory notes

December 20, 2015 marks the end of an important stage in the history of contemporary Spain. That day, elections were held to the Cortes Generales, the result of which ultimately confirmed the final disintegration of the prevailing order of power on the central political scene. The winning of a powerful position in the Congress of Deputies by two new state-wide parties — the Ciudadanos and Podemos — not only signified a transformation of the system, in which two political parties had previously dominated, into a multi-party model, but also resulted in the inability to form a central government. On 3 May 2016, for the first time since the establishment of a democratic political system after the death of General Francisco Franco, the Spanish government was dissolved and new elections were to be held, not by order of the prime minister, but by a decree of the monarch.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the political stalemate that had already been predicted by the polls, as well as the significant increase of the separatist aspirations of Catalonia, urged the main political actors to begin a public debate on the need to change the constitution.

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<sup>1</sup> Real Decreto 184/2016, de 3 de mayo, de disolución del Congreso de los Diputados y del Senado y de convocatoria de elecciones. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, núm. 107, de 3 de mayo 2016.

The events outlined above, which will be discussed more broadly further on, urge us to pose a research question on how the 2008 economic crisis has affected the functioning of the political system in contemporary Spain. Analysis of the political events taking place in the state makes us believe that it was this very factor that had the biggest impact on the course of a series of changes that took place therein. A critical evaluation of the following detailed hypotheses should help us verify the mentioned general hypothesis:

1. First of all, it can be assumed that the consecutive economic crises in the history of Spain significantly affected the shaping of the political system of this state in the second half of the 20th century.
2. Secondly, it can be assumed that the deep economic crisis of 2008 had to lead to significant decrease of public confidence in the institutions of the Spanish state that had been shaped in the second half of the 20th century.
3. Thirdly, it was most probably the decrease of confidence in state institutions after 2008 by the people functioning in a “network society” that led to the development of new social movements that vowed to protect the rights of those who had been hit hardest by the economic crisis.
4. Fourth, it is also possible to assume that the social movements established to protect the rights of such citizens became the foundation upon which the political position of the new Spanish state-wide parties was built.
5. Fifth, it can also be assumed that the winning of a large number of votes to the Congress of Deputies by the new state-wide parties, who had contested the actions and values of the main actors on the Spanish party scene, made it impossible to form a government in the political centre.
6. Sixth, it is assumed with high probability that the political crisis that had developed as a result of the economic crisis, will lead to attempts to change the constitution of 1978.
7. Seventh, the significant increase in decentralising tendencies in peripheral regions of the Spanish state, especially in Catalonia, is most probably the result of the 2008 economic crisis.

### 3.2 Economic factors and the shape of the political system after 1978

An analysis of the economic history of Spain allows us to point to many important events, the results of which were felt for the centuries to come, and which affected to a significant degree the institutional structure and political power order in the country. However, some were groundbreaking, and had left

a mark in the workings of the current political system. Surely, an event of this kind which had substantially shaped the regions of political influence in Spain for the centuries to come and had defined internal economic relations, was declaring Madrid the capital of the country in 1561.<sup>2</sup>

In order to better understand how Spain's current political system works, it is necessary to learn about the times of Carol V's reign. He did not have a permanent seat and travelled around the country with his court. The emperor stopped at the most prominent palaces belonging to nobles who lived in the areas the emperor was visiting. Tired of having to travel all the time, he convinced his son Philip II to establish a seat for the royal authorities, to which his subordinates would travel to settle their affairs.

One might wonder how Spain's future would unravel if Philip II, guided by the logic of those days, had established the capital in a place ensuring access to sailing waters, namely at the coast of the sea or ocean, or at least by a river allowing for inland sailing. During this ruler's reign, only such cities stood a chance of transforming into a permanent seat of the royal court. Given the geographical realities of the Iberian Peninsula, it is assumed that given Spain's scarce river network, the choice should have gone to one of the most quickly developing port cities located either along the Mediterranean or along the Atlantic. Ideally, these would have included Barcelona, Lisbon, or Seville. Each of these cities provided sea freight potential and were fantastically developed centres ensuring a dynamic exchange of thought. It quickly turned out, however, that the emperor's personal traits did not permit him to make a rational choice of this kind. Phillip II was not content with being only a *primus inter pares* among the most notable and affluent clans living in a given area, but wished to hold a special position in the capital. That is why the proposal for establishing a capital in Barcelona was rejected, one reason being that in Catalonia, the monarch had a much weaker political standing than in Castilla that was the main treasury financing his political ambitions. There was a similar issue with Lisbon. When a decision to establish a permanent capital was being made, Phillip II was not the king of Portugal yet. It was not until 1581, that is, 20 years after this crucial decision, that he was proclaimed king. Therefore Seville seemed to be the most logical and advantageous choice for the state. The city had a population of 140,000 at that time, which made it the fourth largest city in Europe after London, Paris, and Naples. Ships loaded with goods arriving from overseas lands and remaining countries of the old continent could easily dock there. Thanks to its location and character, it was also the perfect place for thought exchange, which was always very important for the development of

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<sup>2</sup> More on the establishment of the capital of Spain by Philip II, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: "Wpływ kryzysów gospodarczych na działanie systemu politycznego współczesnej Hiszpanii." *Przegląd Narodowościowy. Review of Nationalities: ¿Adónde vas, España?* 2016, no. 5, pp. 43—62.

capitals and entire countries. However, Seville did not find favour in the eyes of Philip II. Driven by his personal ambitions, the ruler chose to establish the capital of Spain in an absolutely unexpected location. Madrid did not possess any of the features required of a state capital. First of all, in the middle of the 16th century, the city was not that well developed. It did not have access to sailable waters providing easy access to the city. On the contrary: the city, which was located at an altitude of 655 meters above sea level, the highest of any capital in Europe,<sup>3</sup> was in fact very difficult to access. The poor road infrastructure made the trip to Madrid very difficult and dangerous. It is also worth noting that the Catholic monarch in charge of the state in which religion played a fundamental role, chose a city that was third in size in the Castille region and where no bishop resided.<sup>4</sup>

Despite all of the listed disadvantages, the king's court had finally settled in Madrid in 1561. In this way, Madrid became an almost inaccessible capital of a state. In fact, it was only the residence of the monarch and his court in a time when Spain was entering its imperial era, garnering increasingly more overseas assets. As a result, it was cut off from new economic and intellectual trends, new ideas and innovations. The elites of those days, who possessed ambitions of achieving great things, effectively stayed clear of the city. Attempts to find scholars, engineers or merchants building their wealth on overseas trade, were futile. At the same time, cities on the peripheries of the country, with access to seas and the Atlantic, were developing much faster and more dynamically than the capital.<sup>5</sup>

Madrid was visited only by those who had urgent issues to tend to at the royal court. The intellectual and economic elites of the state lived on the peripheries of the country and were not being included in the governance process. This role was given to the Castilian and Andalusian elites, which had built their wealth not on the production of goods and provision of services, but on the privileges received on account of their influences in the royal court. These elites exerted more and more influence on state policy in times when the rivalry between the greatest European states, which had been building their overseas empires, began to urge rulers to pursue a path of increased centralisation of their states.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Madrid is the second highest capital in Europe after Andorra la Vella (1, 123 m above sea level).

<sup>4</sup> C. MOLLINAS: *Que hacer con España. Del capitalismo castizo a la refundación de un país*. Imago Mundi. Barcelona 2013, pp. 132—137.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> More on the centralisation of European states, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Pozycja partii regionalnych w systemie politycznym współczesnej Hiszpanii*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. Katowice 2014, pp. 73—76.

The disproportions between the economic significance and the political influences actually possessed by elites operating in the political centre, namely in Castille and Andalusia, and those that operated in coastal, peripheral regions, became apparent in the 19th century. The situation was made complicated by several matters. First of all, the French Revolution did not result in the same changes in Spain as in most European states. It did not cause a real shift in political power between the bourgeoisie and the nobility that had dominated at the time. On the contrary: the wave of key changes that swept across Europe in those days helped the nobility from Castille and Andalusia to significantly strengthen their economic and political positions.<sup>7</sup> This meant the further consolidation of the existing economic and political divisions instead of the inclusion of new social groups from peripheral areas of the state in the governance process. Second of all, assumption of a new state governance model based on the federal state system developed on the new continent, turned out to be difficult given the current social and economic realities. Introduction of such a model in Spain at the end of the 19th century would allow for the inclusion of economic elites from the country's peripheries into the political decision-making process. Such an attempt was identified in the provisions of a draft Constitution of the Federal Republic of Spain proposed in 1873.<sup>8</sup> A precise analysis of this text allows us to observe that the Spanish legislator decided to implement many solutions that had been in force since 1787 in the United States of America. However, one feature of the proposed arrangement clearly indicated an intention of the political centre to maintain control over the territorial organisation of the state and the internal systems of the potential federal states. The regulations that indicate such a stance can be found in article 102 of the 1873 draft constitution. The mentioned article required that drafts of state constitutions be presented for approval to the federal Cortes. The adoption of such a solution clearly points to a wholly different historical setting in the USA and in the Spanish Republic. The Spanish monarchy was not established as a voluntary union between sovereign regions. The state, which had begun to function rather effectively after a series of reforms strengthening the position of the central government, was not prepared to function in conditions of very extensive regional autonomy. The acceptance of many new solutions provided by democracy, including general elections, a catalogue of civic rights or the republican form of government, was in itself a huge challenge for the existing, unconsolidated political elites. Introducing the mentioned principle, whereby the regional constitutions had to be accepted by the federal Cortes, was probably motivated by the central government's intent

<sup>7</sup> More on the strengthening of the position of the Spanish nobility after the French resolution, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Pozycja partii regionalnych...*, pp. 76–78.

<sup>8</sup> See [http://www.congreso.es/docu/constituciones/1869/cons1873\\_cd.pdf](http://www.congreso.es/docu/constituciones/1869/cons1873_cd.pdf) (retrieved: 5.02.2016).



to maintain a certain level of control over the regions. This lack of courage, which prevented Spain from copying the US system in its entirety, meant that 19th-century Spain was not yet ready for such far-reaching decentralisation.<sup>9</sup> Thirdly and finally, the 19th century was not the best period in Spain's history. The ultimate loss of its overseas assets, which had hitherto permitted Spain to maintain a relatively good economic situation and a semblance of power on the international scene, meant that the country had to bid a final farewell to the splendour of its imperial past.<sup>10</sup> This, in turn, in a time when cultural nationalism was in its heyday,<sup>11</sup> prevented Spaniards from building a strong national identity. The lack of economic and political success, which would characterise the political centre, was rather a catalyst that advanced the petrification of peripheral nationalisms instead of fostering the pride of being a Spaniard. It needs to be stated that in the 20th century, these factors greatly influenced decentralising trends, especially in Catalonia and the Basque Country.

Spain entered into the 20th century with a political and social structure that was influenced greatly by economic factors. However, the subsequent historical events that occurred in that century did not introduce much change to the country's social and political structure. The short-lived existence of the II Republic and, most importantly, the 36 year long rule of the authoritarian General Franco did not lead to any change in the ranks of the ruling elites, nor did it draw the elites of the state's peripheral areas into the system of governance.

Certain changes were only to occur at the end of the 1970s after Franco's death. As noted by Juan José Linz, the model of transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy in Spain during this period is referred to as the *reforma-pactada, ruptura-pactada*. Generally speaking, the reform involved the ruling elite entering into a pact with part of the opposition, which was open to dialogue.<sup>12</sup> In consequence, the representatives of the elite that had ruled until then had maintained influence over the shaping of the new political order during the transformation period, while the opposition was peacefully included in the governance process. For almost 40 years, this transition model was considered as a very good and effective solution for the country. It ensured a bloodless transfer into a new political reality. The constitutional order established in 1978 consolidated the dominating political position of the representatives of former elites and the opposition groups that had been allowed to enter into the govern-

<sup>9</sup> M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Katalonia na drodze do niepodległości?* Bytom 2006, pp. 25–26.

<sup>10</sup> More on the situation of the Spanish economy in the 19th century, see *Historia económica de España*. Eds. A. GONZÁLEZ ENCISO, J.M. MATÉS BARCO. Ariel. Barcelona 2007, pp. 463–486.

<sup>11</sup> More on the concept of cultural nationalism, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: "Wolność wyboru i prawo samostanowienia a interes państwa wielonarodowego." In: *Wolność w epoce poszukiwań*. Eds. M. SZULAKIEWICZ, Z. KARPUS. Toruń 2007, pp. 392–394.

<sup>12</sup> J.J. LINZ, A. STEPAN: *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore—London 1996, pp. 57, 87–115.

ance process. They came to power in a new socio-political reality in the form of two main state-wide parties — the People's Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE). The constitution also brought into the ruling process the representatives of peripheral regions, with each one possessing their own distinct identity.<sup>13</sup>

The events that unfolded after the economic crisis erupted in 2008 have seriously undermined the established order. Both the central elites and the elites of the peripheral regions failed to cope with the new social and economic challenges they were faced with.

### 3.3 Loss of confidence in state institutions after 2008

The gradually worsening economic situation after 2008 began to be felt more and more severely by Spain's society. Subsequent surveys conducted by the Centre for Sociological Research (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas — CIS) found that increasingly more respondents perceived the economic situation as bad or very bad. In 2008 such answers were given by 40.3% of those surveyed (27.4% — bad and 12.9% — very bad, respectively). However, in 2013, the total percentage of people who claimed the economic situation was bad or very bad was 90.8% (37.9% — bad and 52.9% — very bad, respectively).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The constitutional system of contemporary Spain, operating on the basis of the 1978 constitution has been described in quite some detail in the Polish literature on the subject. The key works include: J. IWANEK: "Hiszpania." In: *Systemy polityczne wysoko rozwiniętych krajów kapitalistycznych*. Ed. A. JAMRÓZ. Warszawa 1989, pp. 356—394; T. MOŁDAWA: *System konstytucyjny Hiszpanii*. Warszawa 2012; M. MYŚLIWIEC: "Hiszpania." In: *Systemy polityczne wybranych państw basenu Morza Śródziemnego*. Eds. K. KRYSIENIEL, M. MYŚLIWIEC. Poznań—Chorzów 2011, pp. 113—153.

<sup>14</sup> The data is based on the results of research published on the following CIS websites in the years 2008—2016, retrieved on 20.04.2016:

[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2740\\_2759/2749/e274900.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2740_2759/2749/e274900.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2780\\_2799/2782/e278200.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2780_2799/2782/e278200.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2820\\_2839/2828/e282800.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2820_2839/2828/e282800.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2840\\_2859/2859/e285900.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2840_2859/2859/e285900.html)  
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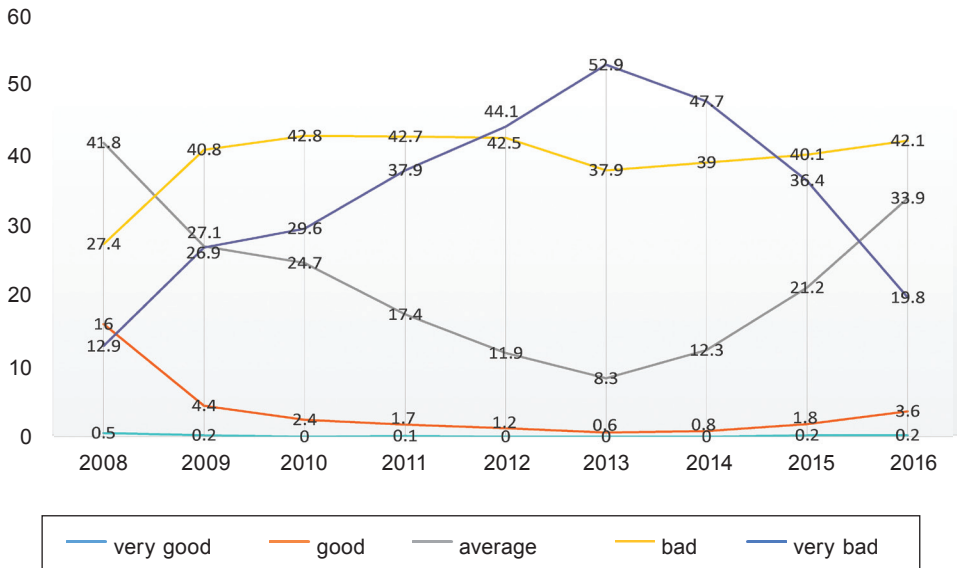


Chart 3.1. Results of research carried out by the CIS in the years 2008—2016 in answer to the question: How do you perceive the current economic situation in Spain?

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.cis.es/> (retrieved: 10.04.2016).

During the said period, the state's political situation was not perceived to be much better. In 2008, it was rated as bad or very bad by 36.5% of the respondents (26.4% as bad and 10.1% as very bad, respectively). Culmination of the very bad perception of the political situation occurred a year later than in the case of the economic situation. In 2014, it was rated as bad or very bad by 81.8% of the respondents (34.1% as bad and 50.4% as very bad, respectively).<sup>15</sup>

Interesting conclusions can also be drawn based on 2008 CIS research results on the most serious problems facing Spain. In 2008, the respondents were asked to identify several events that caused the most serious complications in the state. In first place, they mentioned unemployment (43%), economic problems

<sup>15</sup> The data is based on the results of research published on the following CIS websites in the years 2008—2016, retrieved on 20.04.2016:

[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2740\\_2759/2749/e274900.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2740_2759/2749/e274900.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2780\\_2799/2782/e278200.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2780_2799/2782/e278200.html)  
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[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2920\\_2939/2927/e292700.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2920_2939/2927/e292700.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2960\\_2979/2976/e297600.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2960_2979/2976/e297600.html)  
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[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/3120\\_3139/3124/Es3124mar.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/3120_3139/3124/Es3124mar.html)

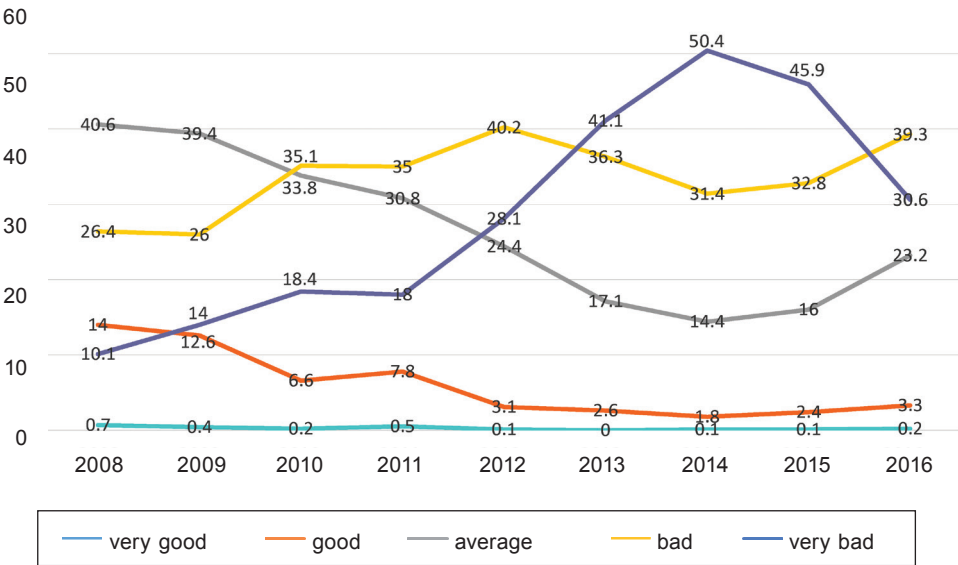


Chart 3.2. Results of research carried out by the CIS in the years 2008–2016 in answer to the question: How do you assess the current political situation in Spain?

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.cis.es/> (retrieved: 10.04.2016).

(39.2%), terrorism (35.1%) and immigrants (23.7%). Relatively few responses included politicians and political parties (8.9%) or corruption (0.7%). The following years produced entirely different results. This is particularly evident in the survey conducted in 2015, seven years after the economic crisis ensued. As previously, Spaniards also identified unemployment as one the state's most serious problems. This time however, 79.4% of respondents provided such an answer. The second most serious problem was identified as corruption (55.5%), the third as economic issues (24.5%) while the fourth as politics and politicians (21.8%).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The data is based on the results of research published on the following CIS websites in the years 2008–2016, retrieved on 20.04.2016:

[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2740\\_2759/2749/e274900.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2740_2759/2749/e274900.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2780\\_2799/2782/e278200.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2780_2799/2782/e278200.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2820\\_2839/2828/e282800.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2820_2839/2828/e282800.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2840\\_2859/2859/e285900.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2840_2859/2859/e285900.html)  
[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2920\\_2939/2927/e292700.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2920_2939/2927/e292700.html)  
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[http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/3000\\_3019/3011/es3011mar.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/3000_3019/3011/es3011mar.html)  
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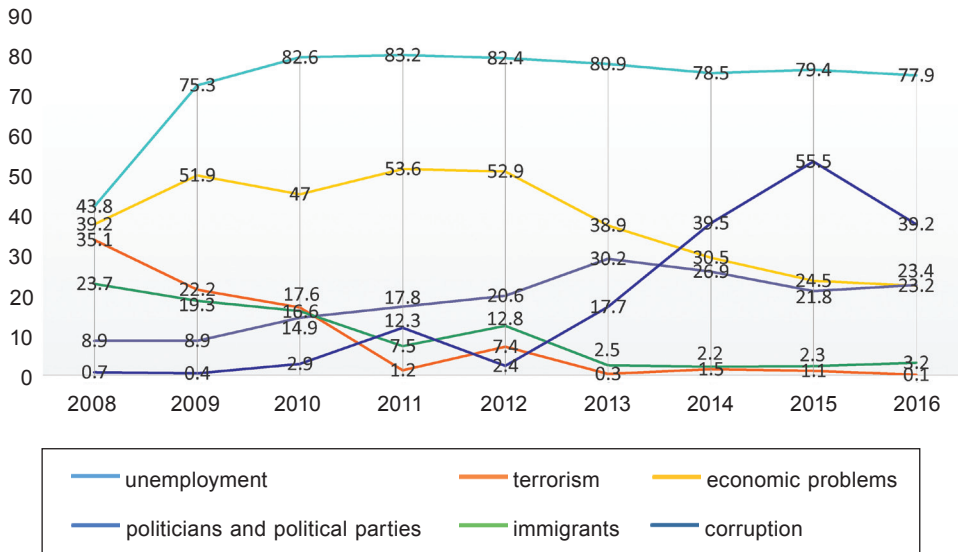


Chart 3.3. Results of research carried out by the CIS in the years 2008–2016 in answer to the question: According to you, what is the most serious problem in Spain?

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.cis.es/> (retrieved: 10.04.2016).

The mentioned results are not surprising, given the events that took place in the public realm since 2008.<sup>17</sup> In conditions of a continuously deteriorating living and material situation of many Spanish families, the media, which had thus far been reluctant to speak about corruption scandals, began talking about them almost exclusively. The availability of various means of public communication made it impossible for conventional media to ignore this information. The amount and the quality of information being communicated to the public about public servants at different levels of state administration — local, regional, and central — literally inundated the average listener with information. What made matters worse was that the main actors behind the subsequent corruption scandals were mostly state servants connected with the country's political parties. And so, one of the most resounding scandals at the local level was that of the land sold in Torremolinos, in the famous Costa del

<sup>17</sup> The data on corruption in Spain presented later is based on the results of research published on the following websites of Transparency International, retrieved on 15.05.2016:

[http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/transparency\\_international\\_informe\\_anual\\_2008](http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/transparency_international_informe_anual_2008)

[http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/informe\\_anual\\_2009](http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/informe_anual_2009)

[http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/transparency\\_international\\_annual\\_report\\_2010](http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/transparency_international_annual_report_2010)

[http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/annual\\_report\\_2012](http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/annual_report_2012)

<http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#downloads>

Sol tourist resort, which was referred to as the Ciudad del Golf case, in which the People's Party's long-time mayor, Pedro Fernández Montes, was involved (found innocent by the court).<sup>18</sup> Another example was that of the Sayalonga case, in which José Luis Navas Camacho, the former mayor of the town from the PSOE party, was involved in. The irregularities concerning management of communal property that were revealed, were resolved by a court ruling that had sentenced him to a year in prison, a nine-year ban on holding public functions, and a fine.<sup>19</sup> In turn, the United Left (IU) was implicated in the infamous Alzoaina case corruption scandal that was discovered on the local level. Antonio Blanco, member of the party and mayor of the town, was found guilty for irregularities in property sales, sentenced to 20 years in prison, and banned from holding any public office.<sup>20</sup>

The regional level was not free from corruption scandals either. One of the most notorious scandals that involved this level of government was the Millet case connected with the management of the Musical Palace in Barcelona.<sup>21</sup> The Democratic Convergence of Catalonia party (CDC) was accused of mismanaging this institution.<sup>22</sup> Another case was that of the Terra Natura Benidorm case connected with inappropriate usage of land in the autonomous Valencian Community.<sup>23</sup> The biggest scandal, however, that outraged society, was the so-called Pujol case. Its main character was the President of the autonomous community of Catalonia of many years, Jordi Pujol i Soley.<sup>24</sup>

However, as the events that will be presented subsequently gradually unfolded, it was ultimately central state-level corruption scandals that inflicted the most damage on the political system of present-day Spain. Politicians of the two major political parties, PP and PSOE, were also implicated. One of the most serious accusations PSOE politicians faced was the AVE case,<sup>25</sup> the Files case,<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See [http://www.eldiario.es/andalucia/enclave\\_rural/Imputado-Torremolinos-presunta-prevaricacion-urbanistica\\_0\\_215928896.html](http://www.eldiario.es/andalucia/enclave_rural/Imputado-Torremolinos-presunta-prevaricacion-urbanistica_0_215928896.html) (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.laopiniondemalaga.es/municipios/2009/11/12/alcalde-sayalonga-condenado-ano-carcel/301901.html> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.diariosur.es/v/20100916/interior/alcalde-alzoaina-acepta-veinte-20100916.html> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2010/07/23/barcelona/1279877184.html> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>22</sup> See [http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2015/11/13/catalunya/1447414341\\_094667.html](http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2015/11/13/catalunya/1447414341_094667.html) (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.diarioinformacion.com/benidorm/2011/09/05/caso-terra-natura-primer-gran-escandalo-fabra/1164767.html> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.publico.es/politica/audiencia-nacional-cita-declarar-imputado.html> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2006/06/28/espana/1151487765.html> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>26</sup> See [http://elpais.com/diario/2010/04/08/espana/1270677613\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/2010/04/08/espana/1270677613_850215.html) (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

and the Flick case.<sup>27</sup> The People's Party was mostly affected by the Bankia<sup>28</sup> and Gürtel cases.<sup>29</sup>

In discussing the central government, public opinion was most outraged by the Nóos scandal, whose most prominent character was Iñaki Urdangarin Liebaert, the son-in-law of the king Juan Carlos I.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of these events, Spain began to be perceived as an increasingly more corrupt state from 2008 onwards. This was reflected in the results of research conducted each year by Transparency International. The corruption index assumes values from 1 to 100, with 1 signifying overwhelming corruption, while 100 meaning there is not corruption at all. In 2008, this index assumed a value of 65, positioning Spain among the group of countries with moderate corruption. In the following years, the index fell significantly (apart from 2012) and in 2015 it reached a value of 58, indicating a trend of increasing corruption in the state. Detailed information concerning corruption in Spain is presented in Chart 3.4.

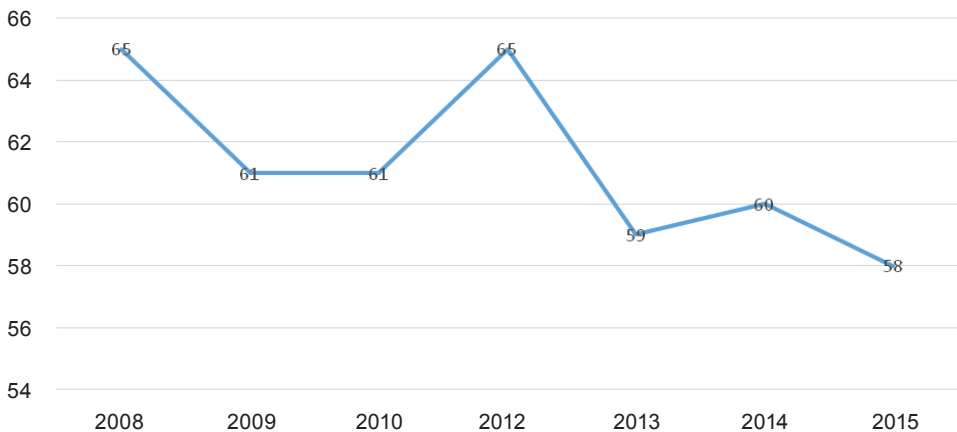


Chart 3.4. Corruption index in Spain in 2008—2015

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.transparency.org/> (retrieved: 10.05.2016).

The economic crisis that began in 2008 led to a significant loss of confidence of Spanish citizens to the institution of the state. The results of research

<sup>27</sup> See [http://elpais.com/diario/1985/03/01/espana/478479610\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/1985/03/01/espana/478479610_850215.html) (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>28</sup> See [http://economia.elpais.com/economia/2012/05/12/actualidad/1336851336\\_318553.html](http://economia.elpais.com/economia/2012/05/12/actualidad/1336851336_318553.html) (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/455013/0/gurtel/cronologia/corrupcion/> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2016/01/10/56917310e2704ecc038b45c2.html> (retrieved: 15.05.2016).

conducted in the subsequent years shows a weakening of positive social sentiment towards state authorities and institutions, which were formed after 1975 in democratic conditions following the death of General Franco.

The most serious changes were noted with regard to the perception of the Spanish monarchy. This institution, which had been enormously popular for over 30 years (chiefly because of the role that Juan Carlos I played in the course of system transformation), began quickly losing the support of the public. The reasons for such a course of affairs were appearing gradually and reached culmination point in 2014. Undoubtedly, a prelude to the series of events that cast a shadow on the idealized image of the royal family was the announced separation in November 2007 of the oldest daughter of Juan Carlos I, Elena and her husband, Jaime de Marichalar. This information was followed by their divorce in November 2009.<sup>31</sup> The situation was mostly aggravated by information published successively by the press since 2006, which suggested that the monarch himself had led a double life.<sup>32</sup> Public opinion became even more shocked in 2012, during the time period when King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia were to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Meanwhile, instead of a celebration, the Spanish and world press was full of pictures of the king hunting for elephants in Botswana.<sup>33</sup> Several facts connected with this situation outraged public opinion. Apart from the moral scandal relating to the increasingly more frequent presence of Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein of plebeian ancestry around the Spanish monarch, which was perceived as even more scandalous by the public was the fact that the monarch had spent incredible sums of money on a safari when many Spanish families were on the brink of poverty as a result of the economic crisis. Furthermore, in 2012, Juan Carlos I was honorary president of the Spanish branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature — WWF.<sup>34</sup> Photos of the king posing next to dead game clearly marked an end to his role in this organisation. However, the nail in the coffin for the Spanish monarchy was the publication of the events that had led up to the Nóos case. At the end of 2011, the Spanish media began to reveal details concerning the mismanagement of the Nóos Institute, a foundation in the management of which former Olympian, representative of Spain in handball, and the king's son-in-law, Iñaki Urdangarin Liebaert, was involved. The foundation's statutory objective was the development of sport among the youth. In practice, however, it was involved in embez-

<sup>31</sup> See [http://elpais.com/diario/2009/11/26/agenda/1259190001\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/2009/11/26/agenda/1259190001_850215.html) (retrieved: 20.05.2016).

<sup>32</sup> See [http://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/espana/2012/04/21/historias-monarca-princesa-plebeya/0003\\_201204G21P22993.htm](http://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/espana/2012/04/21/historias-monarca-princesa-plebeya/0003_201204G21P22993.htm) (retrieved: 20.05.2016).

<sup>33</sup> See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/15/spain-king-juan-carlos-hunting>; <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/04/14/espana/1334397426.html> (retrieved: 20.05.2016).

<sup>34</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/ciencia/2014/06/02/538c6070ca4741ea2a8b4572.html> (retrieved: 20.05.2016).



zlement, fraud, counterfeiting, and money laundering.<sup>35</sup> An investigation into its operation led to the filing of charges not only against Iñaki Urdangarin, but in 2013 also against his wife and the younger daughter of Juana Carlos I, infanta Kristina.<sup>36</sup> The string of events described above led to a dramatic decrease of confidence in the institution of the monarchy in Spain. Studies to this extent performed by the Centre for Sociological Research showed that the institution, which in 1994 was rated at 7.5 on a 10-point scale, received only 3.68 points in 2013 (details in Chart 3.5).

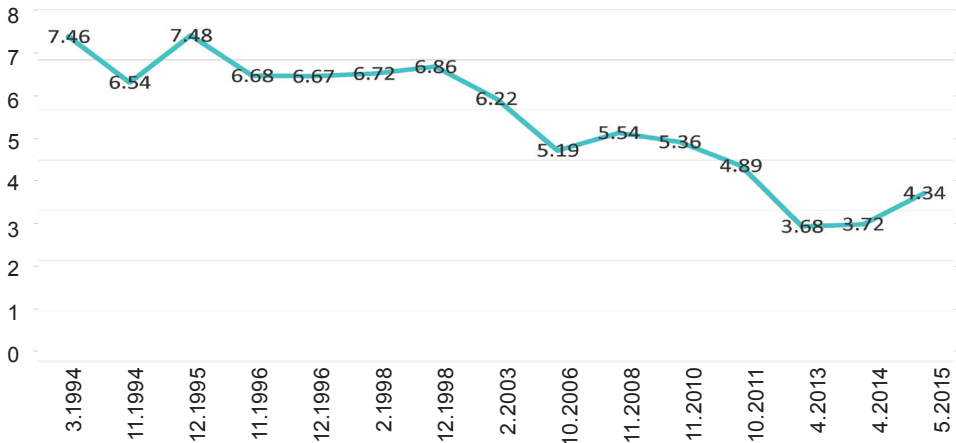


Chart 3.5. Level of confidence in the Spanish monarchy 1994—2015

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.cis.es/> (retrieved: 10.04.2016).

In light of the dramatic decrease of confidence and strengthening of republican sympathies, Juan Carlos I submitted an intent of abdication to the hands of the Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy on 2 June 2014 in order to save the image of the monarchy and salvage the institution altogether. At 10.30 am, the declaration was made public during a press conference held by the head of the Spanish government. The same day, Spanish media broadcast the monarch's speech that had been recorded that day at the Palace of Zarzuela. Juan Carlos I announced his decision to the Spanish public. In it, he referred to the difficult situation of the state brought about by the economic crisis. He stated that such challenges

<sup>35</sup> See [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/11/09/actualidad/1320868088\\_382205.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/11/09/actualidad/1320868088_382205.html); [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/11/09/actualidad/1320835105\\_840729.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/11/09/actualidad/1320835105_840729.html); <http://www.abc.es/20111229/espana/abci-operacion-babel-urdangarin-201112291829.html> (retrieved: 20.05.2016).

<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2013/04/03/espana/1364989322.html> (retrieved: 20.05.2016).

require the further support of the state's affairs by the younger generation,<sup>37</sup> thereby opening the way to the throne for his son, Prince Felipe. A day after the formal submission of the monarch's intent to abdicate, an extraordinary assembly of the council of ministers was held to discuss this event. According to the provisions of article 57, par. 5 of the Spanish Constitution, the government prepared a draft of an organic act relating to the king's declaration. On 11 June, the draft was approved by the Congress of Deputies with 299 votes for, 19 against, and 23 absentions. On 17 June, the draft was approved by the Senate by a majority of 233 votes for, 5 against, and 20 absentions. The official promulgation of the organic act approved by parliament took place on 18 June 2014, and the following day it was published in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* official gazette.<sup>38</sup> This event meant the formal approval of Juan Carlos I's abdication. According to the regulations of article 57, par. 1 of the constitution, Prince Felipe, the only son of the royal family, became the successor. On 19 June 2014, a ceremony celebrating the formal handover of power to the new head of state was held. That day the monarch began his rule as Felipe VI of Spain.

Public outrage towards the institution calmed down somewhat after the power transfer. As the data in Chart 3.5 shows, there was a clear increase in public confidence in the Spanish monarchy in 2015 compared to the situation in 2013 and 2014. This, however, does not change the fact that had it not been for the economic crisis, this situation would never have taken place.

The crisis also led to a significant decrease of confidence in the central government, which in the realities of the Spanish political system, is responsible for the economic safety of the state and its citizens. According to the data presented in Chart 3.6, several months after the assumption of power by the cabinet of the socialist José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in 2008, the central government enjoyed a public rating of 4.74. At the end of its term in October 2011, the score was only 3.24. Victory of the right-wing government of Mariano Rajoy Brey did not improve the situation much in this respect. On the contrary: the necessity to carry out unpopular social reforms salvaging Spain from a repeat of the Greek scenario led to a further decrease of public confidence in the institution of the central government. In April 2013, the new government received a score of 2.42, the lowest ever rating since 1994. The subsequent years and necessary reforms did not yield any significant improvement. In 2014, confidence in the Spanish government was at 2.45, while the next year — 2.77.

One more feature is worth noting when discussing the issue of confidence. The Centre for Sociological Research asked not only about confidence in the

<sup>37</sup> See [http://www.casareal.es/ES/Actividades/Paginas/actividades\\_actividades\\_detalle.aspx?data=12019](http://www.casareal.es/ES/Actividades/Paginas/actividades_actividades_detalle.aspx?data=12019)

<sup>38</sup> Ley Orgánica 3/2014, de 18 de junio, por la que se hace efectiva la abdicación de Su Majestad el Rey Don Juan Carlos I de Borbón. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 148, de 19 de junio de 2014.

central government, but in regional governments as well. The published results show that Spaniards trust those governments that are close to them, that is, at the autonomous level, more than the central executive. The most probable cause of this state of affairs is the much smaller responsibility of these entities in the context of a regional state, which is a specific case of a unitary state, on the economic matters of the state as a whole. It is highly probable that some autonomous communities possessing broad competences in matters pertaining to fiscal policy, for instance the Basque Country, had coped with the consequences of the crisis better than others. The capacity to respond to economic woes had allowed them to mitigate the effects of the crisis, albeit to a limited extent. Such assumptions are well illustrated by Chart 3.7, which shows the evolution of the unemployment rate in the Basque Country in 2008–2015. The data shows that the region's broad freedom to define its fiscal policy was probably why it managed to provide better protection of its regional labour market.

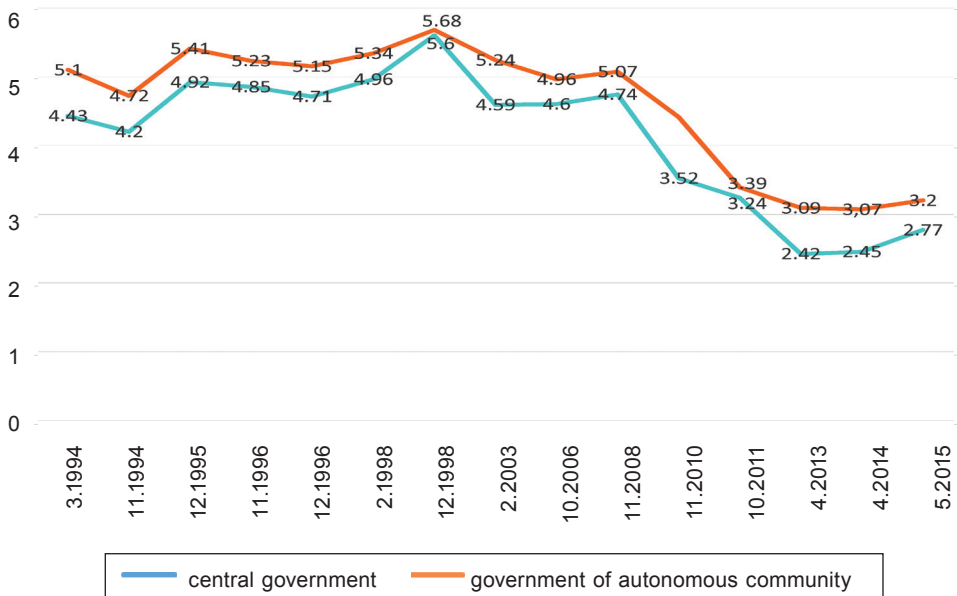


Chart 3.6. Confidence in the central and regional governments in 1994–2015

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.cis.es/> (retrieved: 10.04.2016).

The legislative also experienced a significant fall in confidence. The economic crisis led to a decrease in trust in the General Cortes and the parliaments of autonomous communities, which is shown in Chart 3.8. What is discernible here is that unlike with the executive, confidence in regional government institutions is not always higher than in those of the central government. The data presented by the Centre for Sociological Research shows that in the period of

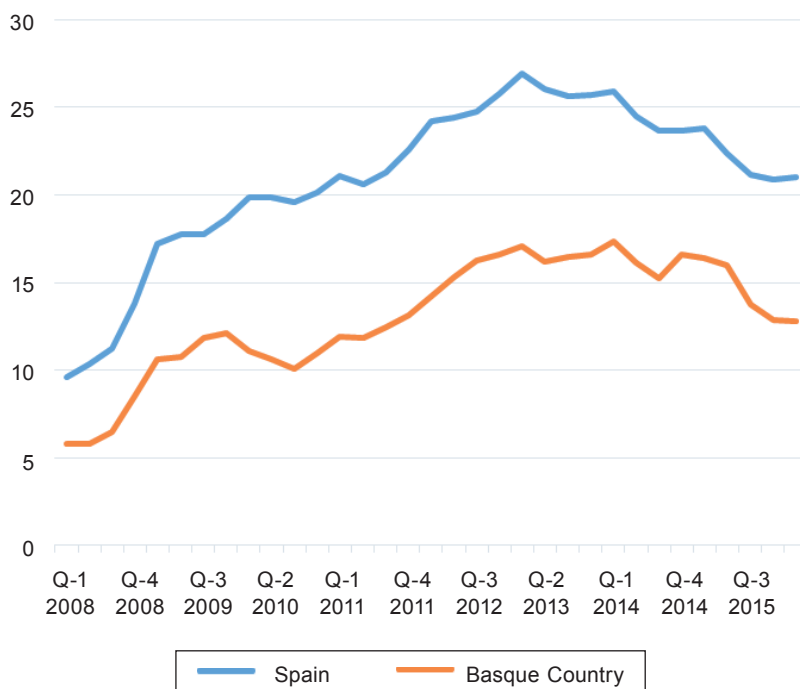


Chart 3.7. Unemployment rate in Spain and the Basque Country in 2008—2015

Source: <http://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=4247&L=0> (retrieved: 25.06.2016).

1996—2003, that is during the parliamentary domination of the People's Party and the government of José María Aznar López, confidence in the General Cortes was higher than in autonomous community parliaments. Given the very good economic situation of Spain, it is difficult to feel surprised by such a situation. As shown in Chart 3.8, the situation took a dramatic turn in 2006 when PSOE and the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero came to power, and changed even more after 2008. Surely, this phenomenon is strictly related to the gradual deterioration of the living situation for the average citizen because of the economic crisis, which the socialist elites then in parliament were unable to address effectively.

In discussing the issue of decreased confidence in state institutions, one must also take into account an interesting study conducted by the CIS showing Spaniards' confidence in three selected institutions — the army, the Church, and political parties (Chart 3.9). It is worth noting that the study was carried out in 2010—2015 when the economic crisis was in full blow. Similarly to the previous studies, respondents expressed their level of confidence on a scale from 1—10, where 1 signified a complete lack of confidence, while 10 — the highest level of confidence. The results show that society, which had experi-

enced the undemocratic rule of General Franco in the 20th century, and which is secularising very intensively at present, has much greater confidence in the military and the Church than in the currently operating political parties.

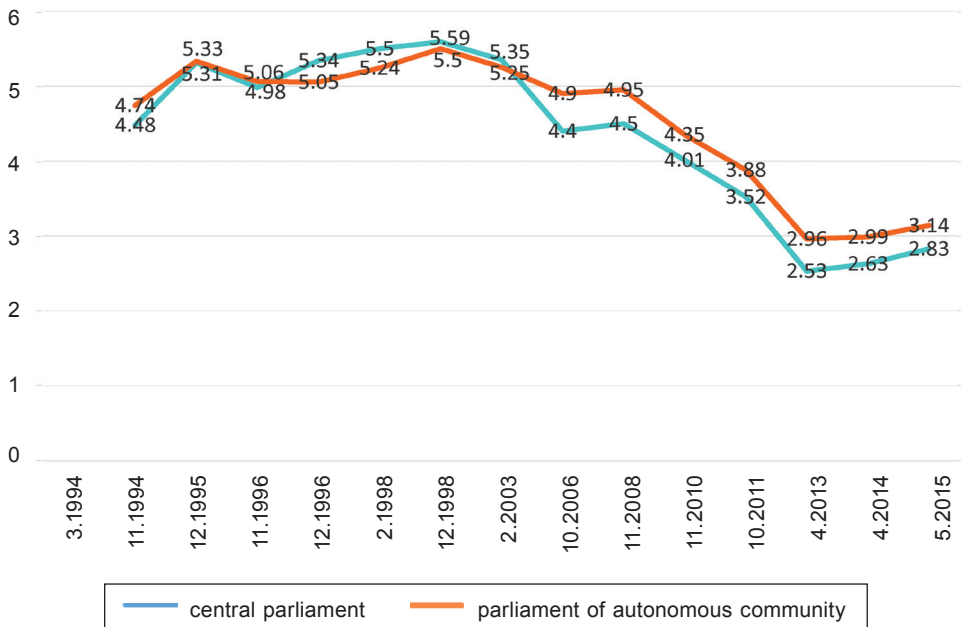


Chart 3.8. Confidence in the central parliament and regional parliaments in 1994—2015

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.cis.es/> (retrieved: 10.04.2016).

The results signify the lack of faith on the part of most Spaniards that the parties will fulfil social expectations. These conclusions are confirmed by the observations of Manuel Castells formulated in 2012. The author noted that at the beginning of 2011, when the unemployment rate in Spain was at 22%, and 47% among the youth, the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, which had been ignoring the deteriorating economic situation since 2008, decided to take the necessary steps to prevent an economic catastrophe. Under the pressure of Germany and the International Monetary Fund but in contradiction to its election promises, the government introduced radical budgetary cuts in health care, education and welfare. In the desperate crisis situation the government found itself in, it decided to recapitalise financial institutions and limit the spiralling public debt, which was just enough to allow Spain to remain in the eurozone, but not to fulfil the expectations of the Spanish citizens, who had already gotten used to living in a country with a well developing economy. Manuel Castells aptly described the social sentiment prevalent at that time: “Labour unions are in disarray, and politicians and political parties are despised by

a large majority of citizens.”<sup>39</sup> His comment perfectly fits in with the results of the said CIS study.

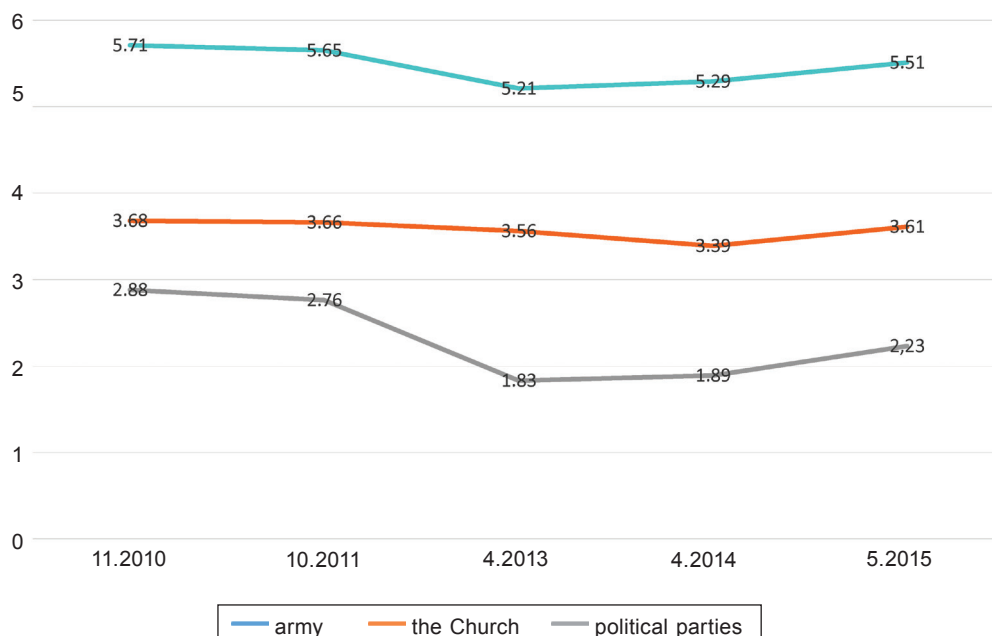


Chart 3.9. Confidence in the army, the Church, and political parties in Spain in 2010—2015

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.cis.es/> (retrieved: 10.04.2016).

### 3.4 New social movements and political parties

The social dissatisfaction and “the hatred towards politicians and political parties” displayed in the conditions of the network society, described by Manuel Castells, led to the emergence of the first groups that had risen to protest against the deteriorating situation of many Spanish citizens.<sup>40</sup> Facebook saw the appearance of the first groups commenting the current political events and discussing

<sup>39</sup> M. CASTELLS: *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge 2012, p. 73.

<sup>40</sup> More on the concept of the “network society”, see M. CASTELLS: *Spółeczeństwo sieci*. Warszawa 2007. More on new social movements according to the concept of Manuel Castells, see M. MARCZEWSKA-RYTKO: “Kategoria nowych ruchów społecznych w ujęciu Manuela Castellsa.” In: *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio K. Politologia*. 2015, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 43—54.



the possible solutions to the situations. The most prominent groups include the State of Unrest (Estado de Malestar), the Youth without Future (Juventud Sin Futuro), Youth in Action (Joventud en Acción), Don't Vote for them (No les Votes) or the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca).<sup>41</sup> On 20 February 2011, a group called the Platform for the Coordination of Groups for a Civil Mobilisation (Plataforma de coordinación de grupos pro-movilización ciudadana) was formed on Facebook, which reposted messages published by the mentioned groups and coordinated the discussions about them, as well as popularised different Internet publications and blogs posts on the economic crisis. It is important to note that the main object of the criticism emotionally voiced on the social network, was the dysfunctional and indifferent political system that was incapable of coping with the consequences of the deepening crisis.<sup>42</sup>

The main, distinguishing slogan of the Platform for the Coordination of Groups for a Civil Mobilisation was: "Real Democracy Now!" (Democracia Real Ya! — DRY). No more than a month later on 16 March 2011, an internet group was formed at [www.democraciarealya.es](http://www.democraciarealya.es) that published a manifesto of the group's sympathisers and called on citizens to take part in mass rallies on 15 May 2011 (15M) to express their discontent with the situation in the country. It is worth noting that neither the assumptions of the manifesto, nor the call to participate in the rallies gained the support or any specific interest from the Spanish political parties. They were also ignored by conventional media. Meanwhile, on 15 May 2011, a week before local government elections that were to take place in Spain, around 50,000 protesters came out onto the streets in Madrid, 20,000 in Barcelona and 10,000 in Valencia. Moreover, demonstrations were also organised in 50 other Spanish cities. An important event that ended the demonstration in Madrid was the speech of Professor Carlos Taibo, a political scientist from the Autonomous University of Madrid, in which he criticised the actions of Spain's main parties and political institutions that acted, according to him, outside the needs and postulates of the vast majority of the population. In his speech, he opposed the antisocial nature of the economic policies of the state, the principle of competition that disenfranchised many representatives of the youth, women, and elders, and called for the need to introduce principles of sustainable development and to limit military expenditure.<sup>43</sup>

Thanks to the social energy that was released on 15 May 2011, the demonstrators did not immediately go home after the rallies, but instead remained where they had ended and began discussing what *real democracy* should

<sup>41</sup> M. CASTELLS: *Networks of Outrage and Hope...*, pp. 73—74.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 116.

<sup>43</sup> I. GIMÉNEZ CHUECA, C. TAIBO, J.M. ANTENTAS, E. VIVAS, J.P. MATEO, A. DOMÈNECH, J.C. MONEDERO: *La rebelión de los Indignados*. Madrid 2011, pp. 7—12.

look like. The participants of the events in Madrid decided then that they would not leave the square in front of Puerta del Sol until they reach a consensus on the meaning of this concept. A similar, permanent “discussion club” gathered the next day at the Catalanian Square in Barcelona. The catalogue of issues discussed had been extended to include matters which were of relevance to the spontaneously summoned assemblies and which were not mentioned or deliberately ignored by the politicians of the main political parties who were busy campaigning before the local government elections. Other sympathisers of the initiative organised by the protesters from Madrid and Barcelona followed suit. They also established illegal camps in other cities to host similar “discussion forums.” The authorities initially wanted to use the police and other law enforcement organisations in to remove the illegal camps from inside the cities, but eventually gave up the idea in fear of losing the elections. These spontaneous forms of establishing civil presence in the public sphere lasted for a long time after the local elections.<sup>44</sup>

Initially, the phenomenon was referred to as the 15M movement, which took its name from the first, major demonstration. With time, however, it was referred to as the *indignant people's march*. The name was taken from an essay of the French philosopher and diplomat Stéphane Hessel, who in 2010 at the age of 93 published a text entitled “Time for Outrage”! (*Indignez-vous!*).<sup>45</sup> Its main premise was the assumption that outrage was the catalyst for rebellion and resistance. By looking at what happened in Spain it can be concluded that this is more or less what happened, though Spain is not an isolated case in this respect. The grassroots nature of the *indignant people's march* led to the emergence of a wholly new political phenomenon in the Spanish public sphere. Its participants appeared in the real space and occupied the squares of the largest cities, where they undertook matters that were effectively marginalised or ignored by the politicians of parliamentary political groups. They also functioned effectively in the virtual world thanks the possibilities offered by modern communication technologies. The *indignant people's march* made it clear to many researchers and observers of Spanish political life that 2011 probably became a prelude to the end of a very important stage in the state's history. The stage in question refers to the period when politics was practiced based on the institutions formed after 1978, whose existence and scope of authority no one had thus far questioned and which had been managed by people appointed by the political parties that were peacefully incorporated into state governance after the death of General Franco. The emergence of the *indignant people's march*, a completely new entity in the public realm, greatly complicated the way the political system had functioned so far. The movement differed much from the

<sup>44</sup> M. CASTELLS: *Networks of Outrage and Hope...*, pp. 75—77.

<sup>45</sup> S. HESSEL: *Indignez-vous!* Montpellier 2010.

traditional political parties both in terms of the way it was organised (e.g. the lack of single, clearly defined leader as a distinctive feature of the movement), the issues raised for public debate and the means of communication. *Indignant people* did not care about the lack of sympathy from the traditional media and used the available technical means to create their political message. The appearance of new blogs, new groups on social media portals and Internet television channels forced traditional media to comment on new phenomena taking place in the public sphere. This, in turn, meant having to enter into dialogue or debate with the *indignant people's movement*, and resultantly, recognise its existence.

It is worth posing the question whether the *indignant people's movement* really revolutionised the functioning of the Spanish political system. A detailed analysis of this phenomenon will allow us to observe, that the gain of the movement quickly began to be exploited by the founders of new political parties. As noted by Simon Tormey and Ramón Andrés Feenstra, after 2008, the Spanish Ministry of Internal Affairs noted a record number of such groups being registered. In 2009 and 2010, a total of 295 new political parties were registered, while in 2011 and 2012 — 492.<sup>46</sup> Although they were mostly local in nature and were established mainly for the needs of the local government elections of 2011, several groups made clear references to the postulates that criticised the existing political system and expressed their intent to change it.<sup>47</sup>

The X Party — Party of the Future certainly needs to be mentioned as one that was formed on the wave of the Spanish economic crisis after 2008. The group was established by the active participants of the 15M movement and was registered at the end of 2012.<sup>48</sup> Its main objective was the establishment of a democracy that would be monitored by the citizens and in the workings of which they would have a much greater say. The organisational structure of the party was based on the 90-9-1 principle, which is connected with the culture of the Internet community. It assumes that 90% of the users of the platform (such as e.g. Wikipedia) only browses its content, 9% edits it, and only 1% actively participates in developing new content. According to Party X members, the position of the party's member in the structure changes depending on the degree of involvement in the party's affairs.<sup>49</sup> Hervé Falciani, an IT networks engineer, was definitely the most prominent member of the party. In 2014, he proposed an

<sup>46</sup> S. TORMEY, R.A. FEENSTRA: "Reinventing the political party in Spain: the case of 15M and the Spanish mobilisations." *Policy Studies*, vol. 36, issue 6, November 2015, pp. 590—591.

<sup>47</sup> More on the procedure of creating political parties in Spain, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Pozycja partii regionalnych...*, pp. 147—149.

<sup>48</sup> See [http://www.eldiario.es/politica/partido\\_X-partido\\_del\\_futuro-reiniciar-sistema-politico\\_0\\_85741571.html](http://www.eldiario.es/politica/partido_X-partido_del_futuro-reiniciar-sistema-politico_0_85741571.html) (retrieved: 23.05.2016).

<sup>49</sup> R.A. FEENSTRA: "Red ciudadana Partido X: trabajo en red por la democracia y la transparencia." In: *Ya nada será lo mismo. los efectos del cambio tecnológico en la política, los partidos y el activismo juvenil*. Ed. J. SUBIRATS. Madrid 2015, pp. 223—224.

IT tool that would allow for the monitoring of European financial operations in order to curb the embezzlement of public monies. He was the party's candidate in the elections to the European Parliament held in 2014. However, the group received only 100,000 votes which failed to win it a single seat in parliament.

Another party that emerged from the 15M movement, was the Guanyem Barcelona (Let's win back Barcelona). They published their manifesto as early as in 2014 and were registered as a political party on 5 February 2015. The main aim of the group was to register the party's electoral lists for the local elections that were held in Spain on 24 May 2015. The party's central figure was Ada Colau, a social activist from Barcelona who had thus far been the press secretary of the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages. Just like the X Party, Guanyem Barcelona applied the principle of flexible membership, which gave all the party members the possibility to participate in all its actions in a democratic manner.<sup>50</sup> Eventually, the party ran in the local elections in the capital of Catalonia as Barcelona en Comú (Barcelona Together). Other parties taking part in the elections, apart from Guanyem Barcelona, also included the Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (ICV), the Esquerra Unida and Alternativa (EUiA), and Podemos, all of which had already operated in the region earlier. The coalition consisting of completely new entities on the Spanish political scene and by left-wing parties that had operated in the region for years, won the votes of 25% of the electorate. As a result, Ada Colau was chosen as the mayor of Barcelona. This event was of great political significance in the region, for since 1982, the function of mayor was always occupied by men of regional and ethnoregional backgrounds that had been active in Catalonia since the establishment of an autonomous community after the death of General Franco. In 1982–2011, Barcelona's mayors were members of the Socialists' Party of Catalonia (PSC), while the mayor in 2011–2015 belonged to the Convergència i Unió (CiU). The victory of Ada Colau was key evidence of a change in the functioning of the political party system in Spain.

Many other activists related to the 15M movement followed the example set by Guanyem Barcelona and after 2011, new local parties with the word "Ganemos" in their name began to form in other Spanish cities (e.g. Ganemos Madrid, Ganemos Málaga, etc.).<sup>51</sup> The capital of the country deserves extra attention in this respect. There, Ganemos Madrid made a pact with Podemos, and before the local elections on 24 May 2015, presented a joint party list under the of name Ahora Madrid (Now Madrid). Having won 63% of the votes in the internal primaries, Manuela Carmena Castrillo, lawyer, a retired judge and former

<sup>50</sup> N. ALABAO, A. CARR: "Guanyem Barcelona / Barcelona en Comú." In: *Ya nada será lo mismo. los efectos del cambio tecnológico en la política, los partidos y el activismo juvenil*. Ed. J. SUBIRATS. Madrid 2015, pp. 235–236.

<sup>51</sup> S. TORMEY, R.A. FEENSTRA: "Reinventing the political party in Spain..." pp. 591–592.

member of the Communist Party of Spain, (PCE) was chosen as party leader.<sup>52</sup> In the local elections, Ahora Madrid won 20 out of 57 seats in the municipal council of the Spanish capital, which placed them in second position behind the People's Party that had dominated the capital's political scene since 1991. In 2015, however, the PP won "only" 21 seats and was unable to elect a mayor independently.<sup>53</sup> Eventually, Manuela Carmen Castrillo's candidacy was supported by 20 councillors from the Ahora Madrid and 9 councillors from the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. Like in Barcelona, this choice had symbolically pointed to a marked change in the functioning of the party system in Spain. The winning of two of the most prestigious offices in Spain — in the capital of the state and of Catalonia — signified the end of these groups' domination (both of state-wide parties and of regional and ethnoregional groups), which were incorporated into the state and regional political systems after the death of General Franco.

The Ciudadanos-Partido de la Ciudadanía (Citizens — Party of the Citizenry — C's) proved to be an interesting phenomenon on the Spanish political scene. The group was established in 2005, earlier than the other parties mentioned before. Its origins are therefore not strictly related to the economic crisis but rather to the constantly growing decentralising tendencies in Catalonia. However, in light of the events that occurred on the Spanish political scene after 2008, the importance of the group is unquestionable. It is therefore worth turning our attention to several aspects that have to do with its emergence on the political scene.

On 7 June 2005, a group of Catalan intellectuals, convinced that none of the groups existing on the regional public scene represented their interests, decided to establish their own formation. The same day, the press was presented with a manifesto titled *For the creation of a new political party in Catalonia*. Its main objective was to express the need to build a new party that rejected references to the concept of Catalan nationalism. The party's formation lasted another several months. Finally, on 4 March 2006, a second manifesto was presented, which was titled: *The Citizens of Catalonia*. The main values its authors made references to included freedom, equality, secularism and bilingualism.<sup>54</sup> However, on 8 and 9 July 2006, the party held its first congress, which adopted its first official name (Ciudadanos Partido de la Ciudadanía — C's) and elected Alberto Carlos Rivera Díaz, a young lawyer from Barcelona, as its chairman. In this way, a party appeared on the Catalan party scene that vowed to protect the constitutional order established in 1978. It had made clear its intention to

<sup>52</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/madrid/2015/03/30/55198539268e3e74748b456c.html> (retrieved: 23.05.2016).

<sup>53</sup> More on the procedure of electing the mayor in Spain (see) M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Pozycja partii regionalnych...*, pp. 404—405.

<sup>54</sup> See <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/nuestras-ideas/ideario> (retrieved: 15.11.2015).

stand in support of territorial unity and equality of all the regions of the state, but most importantly, for the equality of all its citizens. Particular emphasis was placed on the necessity of conducting politics of equal opportunity, which meant fighting discrimination on the grounds of nationality, language, sex, or economic status. The Ciudadanos party also declared its neutrality in the public sphere both in terms of religious denomination, identity and distanced itself from such concepts as nationalism and patriotism.<sup>55</sup> In terms of economic issues, C's vowed to protect permanent employment contracts, social allowances, postulated supporting business to prevent unemployment and educating the youth to provide them with better opportunities in entering the labour market.<sup>56</sup>

However, it was the Podemos party that really shook the Spanish political scene. The group was formed in 2014, a short time before the elections to the European Parliament. On the weekend of 12–13 January of the same year, the website of the *Público* newspaper published a manifesto titled: *Move a piece: turn indignation into political change (Mover ficha: convertir la indignación en cambio político)*.<sup>57</sup> It was signed by thirty representatives of the world of science and culture, journalists, as well as social and political activists. The main objective of the group was to create a political competition against the PP and PSOE that had dominated the Spanish party scene, and to take steps to counteract the effects of the economic crisis that many citizens had had trouble coping with. Following the preliminaries carried out inside the party, Pablo Manuel Iglesias Turrión was elected to head the Podemos party list.<sup>58</sup> Officially, the party was presented on 17 January 2014 during a political event organised at one of Madrid's theatres. Two months later, on 11 March, the Ministry of Internal Affairs registered Podemos as a political party.<sup>59</sup>

The main political postulates of Podemos focussed on such issues as the introduction of citizens' audit of public debt, setting of the minimum wage, shortening of the working week to 35 hours and reducing the retirement age to 60. The party also wanted to conduct a referendum on article 135 of the constitution that was introduced in September 2011 by the PP and PSOE and which limited public sector deficit.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Podemos strongly advocated

<sup>55</sup> A. RIVERA: *Juntos podemos. El futuro está en nuestras manos*. Barcelona 2014; A. RIVERA: *El cambio sensato. 100 preguntas, 100 respuestas*. Barcelona 2015.

<sup>56</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/economia/2015/02/22/54e771a8e2704e6a0a8b4577.html> (retrieved: 15.11.2015).

<sup>57</sup> See <http://pl.scribd.com/doc/199547061/Manifiesto-Mover-Ficha> (retrieved: 25.11.2016).

<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.publico.es/actualidad/pablo-iglesias-elegido-cabeza-lista.html> (retrieved: 23.05.2016).

<sup>59</sup> M. MYŚLIWIEC: "Spain's Party System at Times of the Economic Crisis after 2008." *Political Preferences* 2015, no. 11, pp. 126–127.

<sup>60</sup> Reforma del artículo 135 de la Constitución Española, de 27 de septiembre de 2011. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 233, de 27 de septiembre de 2011.



the liberalisation of abortion regulations, abolition of privileges of the Church, introduction of an eviction ban, lowering of subsidies for political parties and for the promotion of renewable energy and closure of nuclear power plants.<sup>61</sup>

Summarising the considerations made thus far it is concluded that at the beginning of 2014, the Spanish political scene featured not only new local and regional parties, but most importantly, the state-wide parties of Podemos and Ciudadanos. Podemos was quickly branded as a left-wing party by the people, while the second one as a centrist party. In reference to the studies conducted by the Centre for Sociological Research in July 2015, it was concluded that on a scale of 1—10 (where 1 signifies the far-left, whereas 10 the far-right), the respondents placed Podemos at 2.09 and Ciudadanos at 6.18. For comparison, the People's Party was placed at 8.26, therefore to the right of Ciudadanos, whereas the Spanish Socialist Workers' party at 4.38, that is, at the left, but clearly closer to the centre than Podemos.<sup>62</sup>

The first clear signs that suggested that the newly-formed parties won a decisive (for Spain) political position on the central arena can be observed by looking at the results of the elections to the European Parliament, which took place on 25 May 2014. The Spanish election law clearly favours the strongest, state-wide parties in this type of election. Moreover, it creates the conditions for the strongest regional and ethnoregional groups and their coalition members to win votes.<sup>63</sup> That is why, in the elections held between 1987 and 2009, PP and PSOE won the most seats, while other groups acting in the region received only a few. Only two state-wide parties won seats in the elections to the European Parliament held shortly after Spain's accession to the EU. They were: the Democratic and Social Centre (CDS) in 1987 and the United Left in 1989, which in the years from 1987—1999 won seats independently, while in the subsequent years, it had to enter into coalitions. The situation changed dramatically in 2014, when Podemos joined PP and PSOE in the race, winning five seats, with Ciudadanos receiving 2 (details of the election results are contained in Table 3.1).

The successes of Podemos and Ciudadanos in the elections to the European parliament in 2014 were a prelude to subsequent political victories in the elections to regional parliaments. Due to the nature of political competition carried out on the autonomous community level in Spain, we can distinguish between three models that characterise this competition:

<sup>61</sup> See <http://podemos.info/propuestas/> (retrieved: 25.05.2016).

<sup>62</sup> CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES SOCIOLOGICAS [CIS 2015]: "Barómetro de Julio 2015." *Estudio* n° 3104, Julio 2015, p. 19.

<sup>63</sup> More on the legal solutions concerning elections to the European Parliament in Spain, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Pozycja partii regionalnych...*, pp. 255—261; M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Spain's Party System at Times of the Economic Crisis...*, pp. 128—131.

Table 3.1

Seats won by Spanish political parties in the elections  
to the European Parliament held in 1987–2014

Name of party	1987	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
Andalusian Party (PA)	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Ciudadanos (C's)	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Coalition for Europe (CEU) (CDC+UDC+PNV+Bloc Nacionalista Valencià+CC+PA)	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Coalition for Europe (CEU) (CDC+UDC+PNV+CC+CxG)	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Europe of the Peoples Coalition (EA-ERC-PNG)	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Convergència i Unió (CiU)	3	2	3	3	—	—	—
Social and Democratic Centre (CDS)	7	5	—	—	—	—	—
Europe of the Peoples (EDP) (ERC+EA+CHA+PSA+ICLR)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Europe of the Peoples — Greens (Edp — V) (ERC+BNG+EA+CHA)	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
European Coalition (CE)	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
European Spring	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Euskal Herriarok (EH)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
GALEUSCA — Peoples of Europe (CiU+PNV+BNG+Bloc Nacionalista Valencià+PSMa-PSOE)	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Galician National Front (BNG)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Herri Batasuna (HB)	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Left for the Right to Decide (ERC+NECat+CAT Sí)	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
National Coalition — Europe of the Peoples (CN+EP) (PNV+UM+EA+ERC)	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
National Coalition (CN) (EAJ-PNV+CG+AIC+PANCAL)	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
National Coalition (EAJ-PNV, CC, UV, PAR, CG, UM)	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
People's Alliance (AP)	17	—	—	—	—	—	—
The Peoples Decide (EH Bildu+BNG+ANC+UP)	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Peoples Party (PP)	—	15	28	27	24	23	16
Pluralistic Left	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Podemos	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE)	28	27	22	24	25	21	14

Table 3.1 continued

Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD)	—	—	—	—	—	1	4
United Left — Initiative for Catalonia — United Greens and Alternative Left (IU — ICV — EUiA)	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
United Left — Initiative for Catalonia — United Greens and Alternative Left — Asturia Block Left (IU — ICV — EUiA — BA)	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
United Left (IU)	3	4	9	4	—	—	—
Voters Association of José María Ruíz Mateos	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Total	60	60	64	64	54	50	54

Source: Author's own work based on: <http://www.infoelectoral.interior.es/min/> (retrieved: 15.11.2015).

- 1) model of domination of state-wide parties (as observed in Andalusia, Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha, Castile and León, Madrid, Murcia, and Valencia);
- 2) the mixed rivalry model (observed in Aragonia, Asturias, Galicia, Cantabria, in the La Rioja community, on the Balearic Islands, and the Canary Islands);
- 3) model of domination of regional and ethnoregional parties (observed in Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Navarra).<sup>64</sup>

In all the elections to the 15 out of 17 autonomous community parliaments held in 2015, Ciudadanos and Podemos played a significant role.<sup>65</sup>

In the case of state-wide party domination, the votes of Ciudadanos party deputies contributed to the creation of four regional governments: in Andalusia, Madrid, Murcia, and Castile and León. However, the votes of the Podemos party deputies made it possible to form regional executives in three autonomous communities: in Extremadura, Valencia, and Castilla-La Mancha.<sup>66</sup>

The political groups discussed also had a substantial influence on the procedures of creating regional governments in the autonomous communities, in which political competition gives equal chances to state-wide parties as well as regional and ethnoregional parties for victory in elections to regional parliaments and for active participation in the creation of regional executives. In this case, the Podemos party contributed to the appointment of two regional executive power bodies: in Aragonia and the Balearic Islands. Ciudadanos did

<sup>64</sup> More on the concept of the models pertaining to political party competition on the level of autonomous communities in Spain, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Pozycja partii regionalnych...*, pp. 288—289.

<sup>65</sup> In 2015 there were no elections to the Parliament of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country and to the Autonomous Community of Galicia. Both the elections were then carried out at the end of 2016.

<sup>66</sup> More on the creation of regional executives in autonomous communities in which the political competition model follows the state-wide party domination model (following the 2015 regional elections) — see M. MYŚLIWIEC: “Spain’s Party System at Times of the Economic Crisis...,” pp. 132—133.

not support any regional government that operated according to this model. Its deputies voted against the proposed governments of Aragonia, Cantabria, and the Balearic Islands. In Asturia, both the Podemos and Ciudadanos party deputies boycotted the vote of confidence for the regional executive. Moreover, Podemos deputies did not appear in the regional parliament of Cantabria during the vote of confidence for the autonomous executive, while Ciudadanos deputies boycotted the confidence vote for the executive of La Rioja, which Podemos voted against. It is worth noting that in 2015, the only parliament Ciudadanos failed to win any votes in was the parliament of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands. However, seven Podemos deputies voted in the region against the regional executive.<sup>67</sup>

However, the most apparent changes in the standing of parties in autonomous community parliaments could be observed in the case of the regional and ethnoregional party domination model. To this extent, only two communities were studied: Catalonia and Navarra, in which elections were held in 2015.<sup>68</sup>

In Catalonia, the political “earthquake” was mainly caused by intensifying decentralising tendencies, which were to a significant extent a consequence of the economic crisis. Shortly after the elections announced for 27 September 2015, the *Convergència i Unió* coalition that ruled Catalonia continuously from 1980 to 2003, disintegrated.<sup>69</sup> The parties it consisted of — the Catalanian Democratic Union (*Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* — UDC) and the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (*Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* — CDC) — had a different view on the independence aspirations of the region. The Catalanian Democratic Union created in 1931 strongly opposed this process and decided to present their own list of candidates in the 2015 regional elections. The strategy, however, was not successful and the UDC ceased being the regional parliamentary party. A different fate befell the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia, which entered into a coalition called the *Junts pel Sí* (Together for Yes — *JxSí*) with the republican, left-wing and strongly separatist Catalanian Republican Left (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* — ERC). The group received the highest amount of votes in the Catalanian legislative: 62 out of 135 and was eventually able to create a regional government headed by Carles

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<sup>67</sup> More on the creation of regional executives in autonomous communities in which the political competition model follows the mixed competition model (after the regional elections of 2015) — see M. MYŚLIWIEC: “Spain’s Party System at Times of the Economic Crisis...,” p. 143.

<sup>68</sup> As already mentioned, elections to the Parliament of the Autonomous Community of Galicia will take place at the end of 2016.

<sup>69</sup> More on the creation of the *Convergència i Unió* coalition and its position in the party and political system of Spain after the death of General Franco until 2003 and on the platform postulates, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Katalonia na drodze do niepodległości?* Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomii i Administracji. Bytom 2006.

Puigdemont i Casamajó.<sup>70</sup> This, in practice, meant that in Catalonia, despite a change in the ruling formation, political competition continued to follow the regional and ethnoregional model. This does not however change the fact that in the case of this autonomous community, new state-wide party groups strongly revolutionised the regional party and political scene. In terms of the seats won, Ciudadanos occupied second place in the regional parliament with 25 seats. However, Podemos ran in the said election in a coalition with other groups of the Catalanian left under the name of Catalunya Sí que es Pot (Catalonia Yes We Can — CSQP). It was able to win 11 seats, which is exactly the same amount as the People's Party that was strongly marginalised politically in the region.<sup>71</sup>

The course of the election in the autonomous community of Navarra was equally interesting. The party, which received the best result in the elections to the regional parliament, was the Navarrese People's Union (Unión del Pueblo Navarro — UPN). It won 15 of the available 50 seats. This result, however, did not allow it to create a government on its own. This was also impossible given the support of only two deputies from the People's Party. Finally, on 22 July 2015, the regional executive headed by Miren Uxue Barcos Berruezo, the chairwoman of the Geroa Bai party (Yes for the Future), won a confidence vote thanks to the support of Geroa Bai (9), EH Bildu (8), Podemos (7) and the Left — Ezkerra (2), with 7 absent deputies of the Socialist Party of Navarre (Partido Socialista de Navarra — PSN-PSOE). Fifteen deputies of the People's Union of Navarre and two from the People's Party voted against.<sup>72</sup> Thanks to these political decisions, Navarre, similarly to Catalonia, can be classified as a community that functions according to the regional and ethnoregional party model.

The electoral successes of 2014 and 2015 encouraged both Podemos and Ciudadanos to expand into more cities. Ciudadanos' strategy deserves our special attention. In 2014, it "absorbed" 15 local or regional groups,<sup>73</sup> and 14 more

<sup>70</sup> The government of Carles Puigdemont Casamajó was created on 12 January, 2016, two hours before the expiry of the final deadline for the appointment of a regional executive.

<sup>71</sup> M. MYŚLIWIEC: "Spain's Party System at Times of the Economic Crisis..." pp. 153—157.

<sup>72</sup> More on regional elections and the creation of regional executives in 2015 in autonomous communities in which the political competition model follows the regional and ethno-regional party domination model, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: "Spain's Party System at Times of the Economic Crisis..." pp. 153—157.

<sup>73</sup> In 2014, the following political parties entered Ciudadanos: Centro Democrático Liberal [<http://www.minutodigital.com/2014/02/22/el-centro-democratico-liberal-se-integra-en-el-partido-por-la-ciudadania-ciudadanos-que-lidera-albert-rivera/>], Unión del Pueblo Salmantino [<http://www.elnortedecastilla.es/salamanca/201407/28/union-pueblo-salmantino-integra-20140728203056.html>], Partido Regionalista de Castilla y León [<http://burgosconecta.es/2014/09/25/desaparece-el-prcal-y-se-incorpora-a-ciudadanos/>], Ciudadanos Independientes de Sanlúcar, Ciudadanos de Arcos, Ciudadanos por San Fernando y Ciudadanos del Puerto de Santa María [<http://www.diariodecadiz.es/article/provincia/1441785/cuatro/formaciones/independientes/se-agrupan/ciudadanos/cadiz.html>], Agrupación Ciudadanos Rivas Vaciamadrid — Tielmes [<http://>

in 2015.<sup>74</sup> Just before 2016, the group had its structures in all of Spain's 50 provinces. They were organised into 350 circles and local groups made up of almost 29,000 members.<sup>75</sup>

Its successful results in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament as well as the 2015 local and regional elections also had a decisive impact on the political appeal of Podemos. In June 2015, the leader of the United Left (IU),

[www.radiociguena.org/Pruebas%20index/Prueba%20Index%202014/Prueba%20Index\\_141055.html](http://www.radiociguena.org/Pruebas%20index/Prueba%20Index%202014/Prueba%20Index_141055.html)], Alternativa Independiente Sanroqueña [<http://www.sanropolis.com/ciudadanos-de-albert-rivera-llega-al-municipio-tras-integrarse-alis-en-cdl/>], Unión Popular de Boiro [<http://www.diariodearousa.com/articulo/barbanza/chouza-anuncia-proxima-disolucion-union-popular-boiro-pasara-integrarse-partido-ciudadanos/20140924004252088442.html>], Ciudadanos por Alhama [<http://informacionalhamaindependiente.blogspot.com.es/2014/07/ciudadanos-por-alhama-se-integra-en.html>], Unión de Centro Liberal [<http://informacionalhamaindependiente.blogspot.com.es/2014/07/ciudadanos-por-alhama-se-integra-en.html>], Unión de Ciudadanos Independientes de Toledo [<http://www.diariocritico.com/noticia/463586/politica/nace-ciudadanos-toledo-gracias-a-la-disolucion-de-ucit-con-intencion-de-candidatura-en-la-capital.html>], Partido para la Regeneración Democrática [[http://www.cartagenadehoy.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43191:prde-se-integra-en-ciudadanos&catid=101:cartagena-de-hoy&jjj=1444144867950](http://www.cartagenadehoy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43191:prde-se-integra-en-ciudadanos&catid=101:cartagena-de-hoy&jjj=1444144867950)], Unión del Pueblo Extremeño [<http://www.hoy.es/extremadura/201411/14/upex-integra-ciudadanos-cara-20141114002546-v.html>] oraz Loreños Independientes [[http://www.ivoox.com/lorenos-independientes-se-integra-plataforma-ciudadanos-audios-mp3\\_rf\\_2952098\\_1.html?utm\\_expid=113438436-21.PjN6XAE7SNWq0IrvvWXbeg.0&utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fes.wikipedia.org%2F](http://www.ivoox.com/lorenos-independientes-se-integra-plataforma-ciudadanos-audios-mp3_rf_2952098_1.html?utm_expid=113438436-21.PjN6XAE7SNWq0IrvvWXbeg.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fes.wikipedia.org%2F)] (all the parties' websites retrieved: 26.05.2015).

<sup>74</sup> In 2015 the following political parties entered Ciudadanos: Ciudadanos Portuenses [<http://www.diariodecadiz.es/article/elpuerto/1946359/ciudadanos/portuenses/rompe/con/su/vocacion/partido/estrictamente/local.html>], Plataforma del Pueblo Soriano [<http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/2407181/0/plataforma-pueblo-soriano-se-integra-ciudadanos-con-aspiracion-ser-bisagra-ayuntamiento-diputacion/>], Ciudadanos de Santa Cruz [<http://web.eldia.es/santacruz/2015-03-20/5-Ciudadanos-integra-partido-estatal.htm>], Plataforma de Vecinos Amb Trellat de Gilet [<http://www.elperiodicodeaqui.com/noticias/Amb-Trellat-se-disuelve-y-pasa-formar-partepartido-Ciudadanos-en-Gilet/83189>], Unión do Pobo Ribadense [[http://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/amarina/ribadeo/2015/03/10/ciudadanos-creara-ribadeo-primera-agrupacion-marina/0003\\_201503X10C79911.htm](http://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/amarina/ribadeo/2015/03/10/ciudadanos-creara-ribadeo-primera-agrupacion-marina/0003_201503X10C79911.htm)], Alternativa Independent per L'Alocra [<http://castellonconfidencial.com/ciudadanos-aipla-alcora/>], Unión Popular de Alboraya [<http://www.hortanoticias.com/tras-varias-semanas-de-negociacion-uppa-anuncia-su-integracion-en-ciudadanos/>], Gobierno del Pueblo [<http://www.leonoticias.com/frontend/movil/Ciudadanos-Y-Gobierno-Del-Pueblo-Se-Alian-En-Media-Docena-De-Municipios-vn165351-vst443>], Plataforma del Pueblo Soriano [<http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/2407181/0/plataforma-pueblo-soriano-se-integra-ciudadanos-con-aspiracion-ser-bisagra-ayuntamiento-diputacion/>], Canviem Santa Pola [<http://www.diarioinformacion.com/baix-vinalopo/2015/02/04/canviem-santa-pola-ciudadanos-presentaran/1595475.html>], Grup Independent del Masnou [[http://ciudadanselmanou.blogspot.com.es/2015/03/ciudadans-del-masnou-integra-un-partit\\_21.html](http://ciudadanselmanou.blogspot.com.es/2015/03/ciudadans-del-masnou-integra-un-partit_21.html)], Civiqus [[http://www.diariodeleon.es/noticias/leon/civiqus-c-s-va-n-juntos-urnas-carmen-pastor-candidata\\_952423.html](http://www.diariodeleon.es/noticias/leon/civiqus-c-s-va-n-juntos-urnas-carmen-pastor-candidata_952423.html)], Grupo Independiente Oropesino [<http://www.levante-emv.com/castello/2015/05/02/sondeo-interno-ciudadanos-les-otorga/1259090.html>] oraz Plataforma Encuentro [<http://www.elcomercio.es/politica/201504/12/comision-negociadora-encuentro-ciudadanos-20150412004709-v.html>] (all the parties' websites retrieved: 26.05.2015).

<sup>75</sup> See <http://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/origenes> (retrieved: 26.05.2016).



Alberto Garzón, came to Pablo Iglesias with an offer to form a coalition for the needs of the elections to the General Cortes.<sup>76</sup> However, it was rejected. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the party did not have to seek potential allies before the elections to the General Cortes. For this reason, in 2015, as part of an internal party referendum, it was decided to allow the party to enter into local election coalitions on the provincial level, that is on the level of the Spanish electoral district in the elections to the central parliament. This could be done under the condition that the coalition would retain the name “Podemos” in it and that primary elections would be held to determine the order and names of candidates on the presented lists.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.5 Elections to the General Cortes of 20 December 2015 and their political consequences

Elections to the General Cortes were called on 20 December 2015.<sup>78</sup> During the preceding campaign, it was already presumed that the elections would significantly change the Spanish political scene. All polls indicated that the two new state-wide parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos, would win many seats and prevent PP or PSOE from forming a one-party government after the elections. The vision of appointing a coalition government in the political centres was a completely new experience for Spain. This was the first time such a situation took place since 1975. After General Franco’s death, Spain had always been ruled by one-party cabinets. It can therefore be stated that the Spanish political culture of the last 40 years was not accustomed to a tradition and mechanism of negotiating the composition of a central executive consisting of more than one group.

On 20 December 2015, the turnout in the elections in Spain was 69.67%. The highest number of votes were cast for Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy’s People’s Party (7,236,965 votes — 28.71%), which translated into 123 seats in the Congress of Deputies. The Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, led by Pedro Sanchez, received 5,545,315 votes (22%), which constituted 90 seats. The Podemos party won third place in the lower house of the Spanish parliament.

<sup>76</sup> See [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/06/24/actualidad/1435173134\\_869091.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/06/24/actualidad/1435173134_869091.html) (retrieved: 26.05.2016).

<sup>77</sup> See <http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2015/07/25/55b37c35e2704e3e788b4589.html> (retrieved: 27.05.2016).

<sup>78</sup> Real Decreto 977/2015, de 26 de octubre, de disolución del Congreso de los Diputados y del Senado y de convocatoria de elecciones. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 257, de 27 de octubre de 2015.

Thanks to various electoral coalitions formed at constituency levels, it won 69 seats. It is worth noting that the Podemos party itself received 3,198,584 votes (12.69%), which gave them only 42 seats. However, coalitions formed at the provincial level led to a significant improvement in the final result. By contrast, Ciudadanos received 3,514,528 votes (13.94%), giving it 40 seats.<sup>79</sup> Regional and ethnoregional parties won the remaining seats in the 350-seat Congress of Deputies. It is also worth noting that the United Left (Izquierda Unida — IU) received 926,783 votes throughout Spain, which gave them only two seats. For comparison, the coalition of leftist forces in Catalonia (including Podemos) which ran under the name En Comú Podem, received 929,880 votes, which gave it 12 seats.<sup>80</sup>

The results led to a political stalemate in appointing a new government at the state level. On 23 December 2015, Mariano Rajoy, the acting prime minister and leader of the party that won the most seats in parliament, began the first talks on the possibility of creating a coalition cabinet. Electoral arithmetic suggested that the only real chance of this mission succeeding was a proposal to create a “grand coalition” government consisting of PP and PSOE with the support of Ciudadanos. The basis for entering into an agreement was the economic situation of the state and the threat of losing territorial integrity as a result of the processes taking place in Catalonia. However, on 7 January, Pedro Sánchez stated that he does not see any possibility of entering into a coalition with the largest political rival. Four days later, on 11 January, he proposed the creation of “a government of progress and reform” to the Ciudadanos and Podemos parties. On 18 January, formal political consultations were initiated between the monarch and the representatives of the particular parliamentary groups. Only deputies of the Catalanian Republican Left and the Basque EH Bildu did not participate. On 22 January, the first round of talks held by the monarch resulted in the refusal to undertake the mission to form a government by Mariano Rajoy and in Pedro Sánchez’s expression of readiness to do so. A day later, the prospect of forming the executive with a clearly left-wing orientation encouraged the leader of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias to declare a will for his group to enter into such a cabinet along with the United Left party. Iglesias himself expressed readiness to take over the function of prime minister. This declaration did not leave Mariano Rajoy indifferent. He presented the leader of PSOE with a proposal of support for the PP, with him, the governing prime minister, as the head, in exchange for support for the socialists by the People’s Party at the local and regional level. In this political atmosphere, on 27 January 2016, King Felipe VI began a second

<sup>79</sup> See <http://www.infoelectoral.interior.es/min/busquedaAvanzadaAction.html> (retrieved: 27.05.2016).

<sup>80</sup> More on the Spanish electoral system in the elections to the Congress of Deputies, and its political consequences, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Pozycja partii regionalnych...*, pp. 187—213.

round of political consultations. The vision of a government pact between PSOE and Podemos raised much concern among the socialist party politicians who had held important positions in the government. They believed that entering into a coalition with Podemos would amount to political suicide for PSOE. According to them, PSOE should stand on guard of the constitutional order established in 1978. In light of such comments and the increasing concern of the regional party structures, Pedro Sánchez announced that he would submit each proposed coalition pact to inter-party consultations. Determining clear rules of political game ended the second stage of the negotiation process on forming the Spanish government. Given Mariano Rajoy's lack of declaration on any real possibility of participating in forming a government, on 2 February, the monarch entrusted Pedro Sánchez with this mission. Various events and declarations accompanied the period of talks. Its key moment was the signing of a coalition agreement between PSOE and Ciudadanos on 24 February. Two days later, the pact called "For a government of reform and progress" was submitted for evaluation to the members of the socialist party and was accepted with enthusiasm. Almost 80% of them expressed their support for the coalition. However, optimism quickly transformed into disappointment. On 2 March during a sitting of the Congress of Deputies, following a day of debate on the proposal of a new government, a vote of confidence was held for the cabinet of Pedro Sánchez. The results of the vote were catastrophic for PSOE and Ciudadanos. Only the deputies of the two parties voted in favour of forming a joint government (a total of 130 votes), one deputy from the Canary Coalition did not take part, while all the other political parties (219 votes) voted against. This meant a lack of support from the absolute majority of the deputies taking part in the procedure. According to Spanish law, the same vote was repeated 48 hours later. However, the situation repeated itself: PSOE and Ciudadanos deputies voted in favour of the vote of confidence for the government of Pedro Sánchez along with the representative of the Canary Coalition, who had been absent two days earlier (a total of 131 votes in favour). The other deputies, 219 in total, voted against. In this way, for the first time in the history of Spain after the establishment of democratic order following General Franco's death, politicians failed to form a central government. According to the law, subsequent attempts to form a government could be taken for the next two months. However, there was nothing to suggest that any of the parliamentary groups or their coalitions stood a chance of proposing a stable cabinet. On April 25 and 26, 2016, the monarch Felipe VI carried out the third and last round of talks with parliamentary group leaders. However, they ended in failure and finally, on 3 May 2016, the General Cortes were dissolved.<sup>81</sup> This time, however, not by a motion of the prime minister, but by way

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<sup>81</sup> The presented processes describing the attempts to create a government in Spain after the elections of 20 December 2015 are the author's own work based on the press releases of the

of the monarch's constitutional powers resulting from article 99, par. 5 of the constitution.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.6 Spanish constitutional draft amendments

The changes that took place with regard to the functioning of the Spanish party system during the economic crisis that started in 2008 gave rise to the assumption that these phenomena heralded the inevitable end of the political system as defined by the 1978 constitution. These suspicions seemed justified, especially given the fact that in the studied period, almost all Spanish political parties began to present proposals for changing the constitution, which varied in terms of their level of refinement. In practice, the only group that did not submit any proposals in this regard and stood by its opinion that nothing should be changed in the Spanish constitutional order, was the People's Party. The other state-wide parties, that is, PSOE, the United Left, Podemos, and Ciudadanos, took part in the public debate on how these changes should be carried out. What made the matter even more profound, was that in the 36 years of existence of the basic law, it had been amended only twice. The first change was made in 1992 when Spain entered the EU and the country had to extend its local voting rights to all non-nationals from the EU residing permanently in the country.<sup>83</sup> The second change was introduced in 2011, when under the pressure of Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, the PSOE and the PP agreed to introduce an amendment limiting the public sector deficit.<sup>84</sup>

The most refined proposal for constitutional change was submitted by PSOE. The social issues that became part of reality after the economic crisis dawned on the country in 2008. The related expectations of the people with regard to political parties and the strengthening of decentralising tendencies in Catalonia all had a decisive impact on the shape of the proposals submitted. They were first drafted into a document titled "Declaration from Granada", presented by the

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electronic version of the El Pais newspaper (elpais.com), covering the period from 20.12.2015—3.05.2016.

<sup>82</sup> Real Decreto 184/2016, de 3 de mayo, de disolución del Congreso de los Diputados y del Senado y de convocatoria de elecciones. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 107, de 3 de mayo de 2016.

<sup>83</sup> The wording of art. 13, par. 2 of the constitution was then changed, see Reforma del artículo 13, apartado 2, de la Constitución Española, de 27 de agosto de 1992. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 207, de 28 de Agosto de 1992.

<sup>84</sup> The wording of art. 135 of the constitution was then changed, see Reforma del artículo 135 de la Constitución Española, de 27 de septiembre de 2011. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 233, de 27 de septiembre de 2011.

PSOE in July of 2013. It was then used to prepare an 11-page document that was made available on the party's website and which contained the main postulates for an amended basic law.<sup>85</sup> They revolved around three themes: civil rights, the concept of a welfare state and the evolution of a federal form of state. The first theme put emphasis on the need for the state to guarantee access to healthcare on par with the right of access to education, to ensure real equality between men and women (including the need to guarantee gender equality in succession to the throne), an absolute ban on using the death penalty, ensuring complete freedom of conscience and confession and a constitutional right for persons of the same sex to enter into marriage. The key postulate of the second theme was the extension of the controversial article 135 of the constitution, added in 2011, to include "article 135 bis". Its provisions were supposed to guarantee the creation of a special fund allowing for the existence of a welfare state even when the public sector deficit was to be curtailed. The third theme contained postulates of a real transformation of Spain into a federal state. These postulates were to be enacted mainly by changing the nature of the second chamber of parliament so that it actually functioned as a chamber of territorial representation. This aim was to be achieved by allowing the governments or parliaments of autonomous communities to delegate their representatives to the Senate. PSOE's project also puts special emphasis on the necessity to introduce changes to ensure a more just and equal distribution of goods among the particular autonomous communities.<sup>86</sup>

The United Left proposed much more radical changes to the constitution. Similarly, to PSOE, it postulated introducing medical care to the basic rights catalogue on par with the right to education. Furthermore, it proposed that this catalogue be extended by the right to accommodation and the right to work. In terms of the new form of state, the United Left postulated converting Spain into a federal republic and defining it as a secular state in the constitution. It also advocated for the right of the regions to decide about their own future and for the statement "indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation" to be removed from the constitution. The group also postulated the removal of article 135 from the constitution, which, according to the party's politicians, treats payment of the public debt as an overriding obligation in relation to other state obligations.<sup>87</sup> Thus far, these proposals did not take the form of any specific party document that would postulate their implementation.

Podemos politicians are also working on proposals for changing the 1978 constitution. The key figure responsible for formulating these postulates is po-

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<sup>85</sup> See <http://www.psoe.es/propuestas/reforma-constitucional/> (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

<sup>86</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>87</sup> See [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/12/05/actualidad/1417806549\\_557665.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/12/05/actualidad/1417806549_557665.html) (retrieved: 29.06.2016).

litical scientist Professor Juan Carlos Monedero Fernández. Two of the following themes dominate the concepts of constitutional change presented so far: the basic rights and selected elements of the political system. In terms of the basic rights, Podemos is postulating maximum protection of the principle of a dignified life of the citizens, which meant, among others, unrestricted access to food, water, electricity, and accommodation. In terms of the provision of specified public services, the state should have the right to possess so-called strategic reserves. According to the party members, these types of services should include such issues as, for example, electricity resources, which in case of their deficit or complete lack, the state should be able to provide for its citizens. There is also an ongoing debate in the party, whether the state should guarantee each of its citizens work, or only an unemployment benefit. In terms of the rights Spanish citizens are entitled to by the constitution, Podemos also proposes that the right to abortion also be provided by the constitution. However, as regards the functioning of the political system, Podemos proposes to introduce several key changes. Firstly, they are proposing to increase citizens' participation in matters pertaining to the making of political decisions, which are of utmost importance to the state. This would mean granting Spanish citizens the right to submit constitutional amendment drafts. A submission would require the signature of at least 500,000 citizens. The second issue involves elimination of article 96 from the constitution, which regulated international treaties. Podemos politicians propose that a regulation be put in its place that would require state authorities to conduct a referendum every time an international agreement resulting in the forfeiture of part of the state's sovereignty was to be concluded. The third proposal concerning the postulate of providing a significant extension of the citizens' influence on state affairs, involves amending the wording of article 92 on referendums. According to Podemos politicians, the substantive scope of this institution needs significant broadening to allow citizens to voice their opinions on many more issues than has been the case so far. Changes in this field would also involve the introduction of the institution of a binding referendum, in addition to the advisory referendum currently in place. The possibility for conducting a referendum on key issues pertaining to the particular regions would also be in the possession of the particular autonomous communities. Another important change proposed by Podemos is abolishment of the rule defined in article 67, par. 2 of the constitution, which states that members of parliament elected to the General Cortes cannot be bound by an imperative mandate. The party's politicians believe that there is nothing in the way for the elected representatives to be bound by the instructions of an entity on behalf of which they are exercising their mandate. They are also proposing that the constitution should provide for the possibility to remove persons performing public functions from their posts, if during their term it turns out that they are not fulfilling the expectations of the entity that appointed them to their function.



Podemos also undertook an internal discussion on the functioning of the Constitutional Court. According to the party's politicians, it is necessary to consider the dissolution of this institution and transfer of its competencies to the Supreme Court or consider another way for defining its composition. According to the party's proposals, a solution worth considering is a mixed system. The system would require that 30% of the court be elected by the citizens in a general vote, 40% by law corporations, whereas the remaining 30% would be determined by a lottery. In terms of the territorial organisation of the state, Podemos advocates for establishing a federation. Interestingly enough, it proposes a complex state structure without an upper house of parliament, which, according to the party, should be made defunct.<sup>88</sup>

Ciudadanos is the most cautious as regards the need to change the Spanish constitution. Its representatives are of the opinion that the current constitutional order need not be changed radically. Instead, they propose looking into how it can be improved to make the political system function better. They also believe that feeding citizens with the message that changing the constitution will help in solving all problems Spain is currently dealing with, is nothing short of being dishonest. According to them, such a message is simply not true. In one interview, the party secretary for communication, Fernando de Páramo, asked the question if a change of the constitution would solve problems with corruption. His reply was that it would not, which was a true statement.<sup>89</sup> Ciudadanos politicians therefore suggest in first place to consider what kind of changes to the current version of the constitution would be most beneficial. As the party members mainly come from Catalonia, where separatist sentiment is rife, they suggest, in first place, that the constitution should contain a defined maximum level of competencies that autonomous communities can have at their disposal. At the same time, the party's politicians criticise the differences in the financial systems of the particular autonomous communities. They believe this issue should be sorted out. According to them, more detail should be added to the concept of "solidarity" between all the regions. Furthermore, Ciudadanos advocates for changes to the upper house of parliament. The party leaders believe that its competencies should be broader in terms of the legislative process and should serve the purpose of real territorial representation.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>89</sup> See [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/06/26/actualidad/1435332737\\_851221.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/06/26/actualidad/1435332737_851221.html) (retrieved: 29.06.2015).

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem.



### 3.7 Increase of decentralising tendencies

The 2008 economic crisis also contributed to a substantial strengthening of decentralising tendencies in Spain, especially in Catalonia. It is noted that separatist sentiment in this region is not something new. Catalonia's postulates to gain independence from Spain can be traced back to the political platforms of parties operating in this region at the beginning of the 20th century. These aspirations were strongly suppressed under General Franco's rule. The adoption of the model of a regional state after his death was to serve as a remedy preventing the disintegration of the unity of the state. By analysing the policy model exercised by Catalonia's authorities from the moment of creation of an autonomous community in 1979 until 2003, it can be concluded that this objective was fulfilled when creating the provisions of the democratic constitution. The policy exercised by the *Converència i Unió* coalition that had ruled the region continuously for 23 years was characterised by their ability to use the available legal measures to build a strong position of the region in the framework of the Spanish state.<sup>91</sup> Matters began to get complicated when attempts were made to expand the competency scope of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia by reforming its statute in 2006. This attempt was one of the many actions taken by Spain's central authorities at the turn of the 20th century aimed at extending the rights allotted to the particular regions during the transformation of the autonomies' statutes after almost 20 years of their existence.<sup>92</sup>

The statute of the Autonomy of Catalonia was formally altered on 19 July 2006.<sup>93</sup> Actions aimed at changing the most important of legal acts, fundamental to the functioning of the autonomous community, were undertaken by the region's new executive body in place since 2003 consisting of: the Socialist Party of Catalonia, the Republican Left of Catalonia and the Initiative for Catalonia Greens. The left-wing government of the region found a common thread of understanding with the central government in Madrid, which was led at the time by José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero and a new version of the Statute of the Autonomy of Catalonia was adopted. However, the adopted regulations, especially those concerning the identity of Catalonians and their potential fiscal powers encountered opposition from the People's Party. On 31 July 2006, the party's deputies submitted a request to the Constitutional Court to assess whether the

<sup>91</sup> More on the policies of the *Converència i Unió* coalition in the years 1980—2003, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: *Katalonia na drodze do niepodległości?...*

<sup>92</sup> More on the reforms of the autonomy statutes of the particular autonomous communities on the verge of the 21st century, see M. MYŚLIWIEC: "Hiszpańska autonomia w progu XXI wieku." *Athenaeum Polskie Studia Politologiczne*, no. 32/2011, pp. 28—46.

<sup>93</sup> Ley Orgánica 6/2006, de 19 de julio, de reforma del Estatuto de Autonomía de Cataluña. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 172, de 20 de Julio de 2006.

new statute complies with the Spanish constitution. The issue however sparked so much political controversy that it led to a decision-making stalemate within the Court itself. The judges' decisions on the matter were split evenly and it was not until four years later on 28 June 2010 that the Constitutional Court passed a judgement in the case.<sup>94</sup> It recognised some of its provisions as unconstitutional, which enraged the Catalan elites. It was recognised that the Court should not question provisions that were accepted by the citizens in a referendum and that were then adopted by the Cortes Generales in the form of an organic act and given the assent of the monarch. In order to manifest their position, the authorities of the region supported a manifestation announced to take place in Barcelona on 10 July 2010 under the slogan: "We are a nation. We decide."<sup>95</sup> The march, which various estimates put at 500,000 to 1,500,000 people, was headed by the then leader of the regional executive José Montilla and the chairman of the regional parliament Ernest Benach. The demonstration, however, was not an isolated form of rebellion of the Catalonians against the decree of the Spanish Constitutional Court. This stance of protest dates back to 2009, when politicians, impatient as to the lack of a decision in this matter, began to organise local referendums on the independence of Catalonia. They were held as political events with no binding power. The referendums were not organised according to any binding rule of law, since they can only be held by the monarch upon request of the prime minister. However, as early as on 13 September 2009, the first referendum of this type was carried out in Arenys de Munt. Other followed.<sup>96</sup> An increase in tensions between the political centre and the Catalan peripheries led to a situation, in which the "right to decide", and the regions' pursuance to adopt a different model of financial relations between Madrid and Barcelona (modelled on the Basque system), became the main topic of the election campaign before the elections to the Catalan parliament in 2010. During the campaign, the issue of amending the Spanish constitution was not yet being

<sup>94</sup> Pleno. Sentencia 31/2010, de 28 de junio de 2010. Recurso de inconstitucionalidad 8045-2006. Interpuesto por noventa y nueve Diputados del Grupo Parlamentario Popular del Congreso en relación con diversos preceptos de la Ley Orgánica 6/2006, de 19 de julio, de reforma del Estatuto de Autonomía de Cataluña. Función y contenido constitucional del Estatuto de Autonomía: Estatuto de Autonomía y sistema de fuentes; bloque de constitucionalidad, valor interpretativo del Estatuto de Autonomía; fundamento de la autonomía; derechos fundamentales y derechos estatutarios; sistema institucional autonómico, organización territorial y gobierno local; Poder Judicial; delimitación del contenido funcional y material de las competencias; relaciones de la Generalitat de Cataluña con el Estado y la Unión Europea; acción exterior; financiación autonómica y local; reforma del Estatuto de Autonomía. Eficacia jurídica del preámbulo; nulidad parcial e interpretación de preceptos legales. Votos particulares. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 172, de 16 de Julio de 2010.

<sup>95</sup> See [http://elpais.com/elpais/2010/07/10/actualidad/1278749824\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/elpais/2010/07/10/actualidad/1278749824_850215.html) (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

<sup>96</sup> See <http://www.vilaweb.cat/noticia/3619432/20090812/noticia.html> (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

raised not to jeopardise efforts to extend the rights of the regions. The issue of regional independence was not discussed intensively either.

Matters took a slightly different course after the elections of 28 November 2010. *Convergència i Unió*, no longer under the leadership of the legendary Jordi Pujol but his younger successor Artur Mas, won the most seats (62 out of 135), however, this was not an absolute majority. Formation of a minority government therefore required support from other political parties. The issue was made easier by the fact the leaders of the parties forming the then left-wing coalition decided not to renew their political alliance. This did not mean however that they would become politically marginalised. The Catalan Republican Left offered Artur Mas support for his minority government if he vowed to organise a referendum on the independence of the region. The leader of the *CiU* however refused to do so and, as a result, his government did not receive the required majority in the first round of the elections held on 21 December 2010. However, it managed to win a majority 48 hours later in a second vote, which was boycotted by the Socialist Party of Catalonia. By then the issue of Catalonia's independence aspirations had already entered into public debate.

On 25 July 2012, the Catalanian parliament adopted an act introducing a change to the autonomous community's financial model involving the implementation of a system used in the Basque Country.<sup>97</sup> Two months later, Artur Mas met with Mariano Rajoy to discuss the implications of the proposed model on the financial relations between Barcelona and Madrid. The head of the Spanish government, however, stated that he did not see any possibility of introducing the solutions adopted by the Catalanian Parliament. This declaration had severely aggravated the relations between the centre and the peripheries. In protest, some Catalanian communes began declaring themselves "free Catalanian territories" and stated that the Spanish law would only apply on their lands until the adoption of pertinent regulations by the new Catalanian state.<sup>98</sup> The issue of Catalanian independence was also clearly identified as essential for many of its residents during the celebrations of the most important day for the region held on 11 September. Finally, on 27 September 2012, the Parliament of Catalonia adopted a resolution calling for a referendum on the region's independence, while on 23 January 2013, a resolution recognising the region's right to self-determination.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Ley 10/2012, de 25 de julio, de publicación de las balanzas fiscales. *Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya* núm. 6181, de 30 de julio de 2012.

<sup>98</sup> See [http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2012/09/04/catalunya/1346714482\\_589998.html](http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2012/09/04/catalunya/1346714482_589998.html) (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

<sup>99</sup> See <http://www.parlament.cat/document/intrade/7217> (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

Despite numerous protests of the central authorities that together with the Constitutional Court called the Catalanian referendum illegal,<sup>100</sup> the referendum was held on 9 November 2014. It was attended by 37.02% of Catalanian's qualified to vote. Approximately 1,800,000 voters, that is, 80%, voted in support of the region's independence.<sup>101</sup> However, because of the informal nature of the referendum and the low turnout, the authorities could not claim that the vast majority of the region's residents support its independence, and made the authorities seek a more reliable course of action that would be in line with the Spanish law. It was therefore decided to make use of a political custom, which in the UK is referred to as the Salisbury convention.<sup>102</sup> It is based on the principle under which the House of Lords will not oppose the second or third reading of any government legislation promised in its election manifesto. The Catalanian independence formation decided to utilise this model to a certain extent: they decided to present the postulate of the region's drive for independence as a key element of the manifesto.

As mentioned previously, the election to the Catalanian Parliament did not bring an overwhelming victory to the parties calling for the region's independence. What is even more important is that Ciudadanos became the second political power in the region and one that opposed separatist processes in Catalonia. Therefore, we are led to assume that the process will lose its dynamics, at least in the short term.

### 3.8 Conclusions

To conclude the analysis of the changes that occurred in the functioning of the Spanish political system after the economic crisis in 2008, it is necessary at this point to verify the detailed assumptions made at the beginning of the chapter.

First of all, it was assumed that the consecutive economic crises in the history of Spain significantly affected the shaping of the political system of the state in the second half of the 20th century. The conclusions drawn based on the research demonstrate the validity of this hypothesis. In the case of Spain, the

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<sup>100</sup> See <http://noticias.juridicas.com/actualidad/noticias/9176-el-tc-declara-inconstitucionales-algunos-preceptos-de-la-ley-catalana-de-consultas-y-anula-el-decreto-de-convocatoria-del-9-n/> (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

<sup>101</sup> See [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/11/09/actualidad/1415542400\\_466311.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/11/09/actualidad/1415542400_466311.html) (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

<sup>102</sup> See <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-library/hllsalisburydoctrine.pdf> (retrieved: 30.06.2016).

political events and the economic crises that followed created a series of specific relations between the centre and the peripheries. These relations are currently reflected in the functioning of the political system. This is particularly apparent in the shape of the party system, the structure of the system of elections to the institutions that are responsible for creating legislation for the European, state, regional, and local levels, and in the manner in which the state is decentralised. Analysis of the political events that took place after 2008 in the mentioned sub-systems of the Spanish political system also lead us to concluded that it is in these areas that the consequences of the economic crisis were most perceptible.

The assumption that the deep economic crisis of 2008 had to lead to a deterioration of public confidence in the institutions of the Spanish state shaped in the second half of the 20th century also proved to be true. Analysis of the results of research carried out and collected in the subsequent years by the Centre for Sociological Research leaves no doubt as to the validity of the hypothesis. The worsening economic situation of many Spanish citizens brought about by the economic crisis, led to a dramatic decrease of confidence in state institutions, which were blamed for their inability in dealing with such a state of affairs. The corruption scandals revealed in this situation did not improve the image of the particular institutions in the slightest. The dramatic decrease of confidence in such institutions as the central government, the parliament, or their regional counterparts should thus not come as a surprise. After 2008, Spaniards also lost confidence in their monarch. Despite the significant role he played during the system transformation after the death of General Franco, the citizens of the state were unable to forgive him his immoral behaviour, his manifestations of attachment to wealth and luxury during the crisis (the famous safari in Botswana), or the involvement of his youngest daughter and her spouse in a scandalous corruption scandal. The drastic loss of confidence in the institution of the monarch forced Juan Carlos I to abdicate, which in turn ascended his son, Felipe, to the throne. The situation of the monarchy appears to have been salvaged as people's confidence in the institution began to increase. It is too early, however, to conclude whether this trend will be sustainable. The most spectacular loss in confidence, however, was noted with regard to the Spanish political parties and their representatives. The corruption scandals that often involved their members, as well as the lack of ability to quickly cope with the effects of the economic crisis led to a drastic decline of social confidence in parties. Ironically though, Spaniards, a nation which had experienced an undemocratic regime in the 20th century, one that had been dominated by military structures, a nation that is currently functioning in an increasingly more secular society, trusts the military and the Church more than political parties.

There is also no doubt as to the validity of the next hypothesis which assumed that the cause behind the development of new social movements vowing to protect the rights of those who had been hit hardest by the economic

crisis was most probably the decrease of confidence in state institutions after 2008 among people functioning in a “network society.” The emergence of the so-called *indignant people's movement*, leaves no doubt as to such a state of affairs. Citizens' reaction to events brought about by the economic crisis assumed a form that had thus far not been encountered in Spanish political and social life. The emergence of different groups protesting against the difficult situation of many citizens in the state, is a completely new phenomenon in Spain. This however, is not characteristic only of Spain. Such movements appeared in many countries around the world as the economic crisis raged. However, in Spain, they had a considerable impact on the functioning of the political system.

Their influence was particularly visible in the functioning of the Spanish party scene after 2008. In commencing research on the project, one assumption made was that the social movements established to protect the rights of such citizens became the foundation upon which the political position of the new Spanish state-wide parties was built. The results obtained during the research leave no doubt that that was the case. The attainment of a relatively strong position by the Ciudadanos party in the state-wide political arena would not have been possible had it not been for the support of citizens, who were “indignant” about the situation in Spain and their local organisations. At most, the lack of such support would allow for the strengthening of the centre-right party's position in Catalonia as a party opposing separatist processes in the region. The same is true for building a political position by the Podemos party. Its emergence is closely connected with the fact that after several years of crisis, people became aware of the importance of introducing the discussed postulates into mainstream politics.

It is also a fact that the winning of a large number of votes to the Congress of Deputies by the new state-wide parties which had contested the actions and values of the main actors on the Spanish party scene, made it impossible to form a government in the political centre. The system of power in the Congress after the elections of 20 December 2015, surprised many observers of the Spanish political scene. Such factors as the number of seats won by the particular parties, in combination with a lack of tradition in negotiating and forming coalition governments at the state level, led to the most serious governmental crisis since the onset of Spanish democracy in 1975. In the period from the elections until the conclusion of this book (early July 2016), Spain has been governed by the interim government of Mariano Rajoy. The Spanish law, however, places a wide range of restrictions on its operation. It is unable, for example, to submit to parliament any new drafts, nor work on the next draft of the budget.<sup>103</sup> This, in turn, creates further threats for the state, which should be introducing further

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<sup>103</sup> Título IV: Del Gobierno en funciones, Ley 50/1997, de 27 de noviembre, del Gobierno. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* núm. 285, de 28 de noviembre de 1997.



reforms to overcome the looming fatal consequences of the economic crisis. Their implementation, however, is impossible in a situation where the central government is excluded from the legislative process.

Interesting conclusions stem from the research conducted to verify the subsequent detailed hypothesis that assumed with a high degree of probability that the political crisis that had developed as a result of the economic crisis, would lead to attempts to change the constitution of 1978. The results show that the only political party that does not see a need to change the basic law is the People's Party. The other groups would like to see it undergo change. These proposals, however, differ greatly between each other (especially in terms of the degree of clarification and refinement), but raise similar issues in some aspects. One of the common issues raised by the different parties is citizen rights and the territorial organisation of the state. Perhaps in the near future, these issues, that have become a part of mainstream public debate, will become the subject of parliamentary discussions and will influence the course of change of the Spanish constitution. In the meantime, they continue to remain trapped in the realm of imprecise political postulates.

Most certainly one of the more worrying phenomena related to the post-2008 economic crisis is the clear strengthening of decentralising tendencies in Spain. This trend is particularly visible in Catalonia. The hypothesis that the economic crisis will have a negative impact on the relations between the centre and the peripheries is therefore valid. The crisis was the main catalyst behind the sudden intensification of separatist trends in Catalonia. However, a detailed analysis of the issue and the results of the elections to the regional parliament ironically show that the political effects of the economic crisis may inhibit this process, which is very dangerous for the territorial unity of the state. This opportunity for maintaining territorial integrity is recognised in the increasing strength of new parties that appeared during the crisis on the regional political scene. Ciudadanos, which clearly voices its opposition to the region's independence, is currently the second strongest party in the Catalanian parliament. Perhaps then, this party will cope with the separatist narrative better than the regional structures of the traditional state-wide parties.

The results of elections to the Cortes Generales of 26 June 2016 were already known when the research leading to the publication of this book ended. In spite of all the pre-election polls predicting another political "earthquake," it seems that the situation is slowly beginning to stabilise. Pre-election forecasts predicted a significant change in the political makeup of the parliament. The political alliance between Podemos and the United Left was supposed to help the coalition marginalise the role of the traditional left, which had operated under the name of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party. This would have certainly led to a significant change in the functioning of the Spanish party and political scene. This, however, did not happen. The Spanish society, exhausted with the



political crisis and the government stalemate, voiced their support for Mariano Rajoy, the most experienced politician among the candidates for the position of prime minister. As a result, the People's Party, which had continued to struggle with the effects of corruption scandals, received 137 seats, which is 14 more than in 2015. In this way, its leader received a strong mandate to begin the creation of a new government. The Spanish Socialist People's Party headed by Pedro Sánchez received 85 seats, which is 5 less than in 2015. Nevertheless, it retained its position as the second political force in the Congress of Deputies, and despite the pre-election polls, it was not marginalised by the new party (Unidos Podemos) created from the Spanish left. The new structure formed by the United Left and Podemos, which had entered into the election as Unidos Podemos, did win them the amount of seats they were expecting. Seventy-one seats won in 2016 is an excellent result given the conditions prevalent in Spanish politics. However, it did not give the party the expected political position compared to the result Podemos achieved alone in 2015, when it won 69 seats. Ciudadanos was also highly disappointed with its result of 32 seats, compared with 40 in 2015.<sup>104</sup>

The relatively short period between the end of the project and announcement of the Cortes Generales election results does not allow us to draw any long-term conclusions. However, the results incline us to accept an assertion, which at the same time may be treated as verification of the main hypothesis adopted for the purpose of this research. It assumed the economic crisis influenced the course of a series of important changes in the functioning of the Spanish political regime. It should therefore be concluded that even though the economic crisis of 2008 did not have a significant impact on the functioning of the political system of contemporary Spain, and especially on the party subsystem, we are uncertain as to whether these changes will become consolidated and if they will lead to a more serious transformation of the entire political system. This conclusion could have been made based on the results of parliamentary elections conducted on 20 December 2015. Their results led to a serious political and governmental crisis, which gave rise to the assumption that changes would have to be made in the order enforced by the 1978 constitution for the crisis to be overcome. Meanwhile, the results achieved in the elections of 26 June 2016 suggest that the situation is slowly beginning to stabilise. It is difficult to forecast today whether the new political parties will establish a permanent presence on the Spanish political scene and whether they will be able to effectively influence transformation of the Spanish political system. It goes without saying however, that thanks to their emergence, new issues, so far marginalised by the ruling parties of PP and PSOE, began to be introduced into the mainstream public

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<sup>104</sup> See <http://resultados2016.infoelecciones.es/99CO/DCO99999TO.htm?lang=es> (retrieved: 30.07.2016).

debate. It is possible that thanks to them, certain changes to the constitutional order will be introduced in the future.

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